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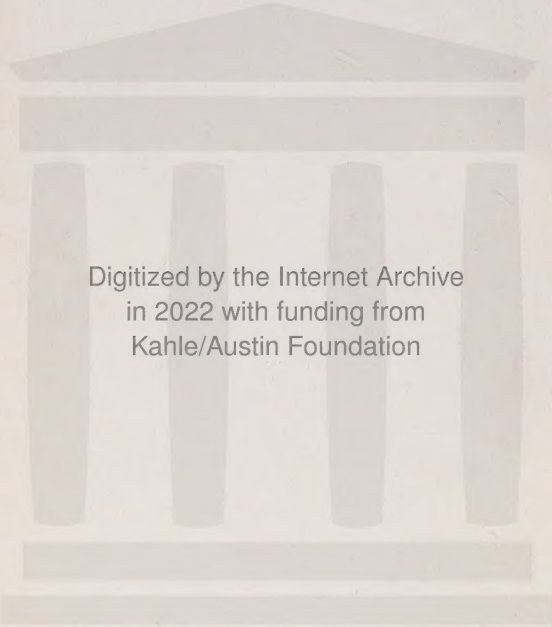
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DIVORÇONS

(LET'S GET A DIVORCE)

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
VICTORIEN SARDOU AND EMILE DE NAJAC

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

48

PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

HENRI DES PRUNELLES, a rich property owner,
aged 40 to 45 years.

ADHEMAR DE GRATIGNAN, a government forester,
aged 25 to 30 years.

CLAVIGNAC, aged 40 to 45 years.

BAFOURDIN.

JAMAROT, a police officer.

BASTIEN, a man-servant.

JOSEPH, a waiter.

CYPRIENNE, wife of Des Prunelles, 25 years.

MADAME DE BRIONNE, a young widow.

MADAME DE VALFONTAINE.

MADemoisELLE DE LUSIGNAN, an old maid.

JOSEPHA, a lady's maid.

Two waiters, a janitor, two policemen.

Scene—Rheims, France. TIME—the present.

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The fee for amateur performance is three dollars, payable in advance.

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DIVORÇONS.

ACT I.

SCENE:—*A small salon, very elegant, half parlor, half conservatory. The entire right side looking toward the grounds is glazed and filled with climbing plants. In the extreme foreground; right, a door opening into the garden. Right center, a window with practicable shade. It is raised at the beginning of the act, as well as the green Venetian lattices, whose purpose is to protect the room from the heat of the sun. At left front, entrance to CYPRIENNE'S apartment. Left center, mantelpiece. Entrance to the dining-room L. U. E. Left rear, large entrance with curtains, permitting a view of a very elegant vestibule which leads on the left to the house-door (not visible) and on the right to DES PRUNELLES' study. Carved wooden staircase going up to the second floor. At right of this entrance, which occupies the greater part of the rear, another door to DES PRUNELLES' study, opening upon the stage. Everywhere, in the vestibule as in the conservatory are pictures, cut glass vases, draperies of all sorts, objects of art, faience, Chinese lanterns, etc. Elegant furniture of various designs and styles. Ferns, flowers, potted palms, small fountain, etc. An oval table in center stage, a little to the left. At the left of the table an arm-chair.*

DIVORÇONS.

Small chair between the table and the arm-chair. Behind the table, facing the audience, a large couch. At the right of the table a small chair, and a little further to the right a "pouf" (large tabaret for two or more persons). Under the table a seat without back. At right front a large arm-chair placed against the wall. Beyond the arm-chair a small chair. In front of the window a small table. At right of this table, between the window and the door, a work-table. A chair between the large entrance and the door at its right. Upon the table in center stage, an ink-well, a blotting-case, a summoning-bell, a copy of the French code, books and pamphlets on divorce, open, annotated and dog-eared. On the small table in front of the window, a coffee-cup and a platter with liqueurs. On the work-table a work-basket. On the mantelpiece a clock and a coffee cup. As the curtain rises, JOSEPHA is discovered standing, leaning against the table, a little toward the right; she is reading a book that treats of divorce. Bastien enters by the large entrance, followed by a messenger who is carrying a package of books wrapped up and bound with string, upon which is the folded bill.

JOSEPHA. [*Without taking her eyes off the book.*] Well?

BAST. Here's the messenger from the bookstore with the package of books for Madame.

JOS. Place it there, on the table.

BAST. [*Taking the package from the messenger's hands and placing it on the table in the middle.*] Is there no answer to go back?

JOS. Wait. [*Taking the bill, unfolding and reading it.*] "The Divorce Question."—"On Divorce."

—"Divorce."—"In Behalf of Divorce." No; it's all right. [*Puts the bill in her pocket.*]

BAST. [*To the messenger.*] It's all right. [*Exit messenger.* BASTIEN seats himself in the chair behind the sofa and leaning upon the latter gazes at JOSEPHA.]

JOS. [*Undoing the package of books.*] What are you doing there, Mister?

BAST. I am contemplating you, Josepha—with love!

JOS. I understand that; but you'd do better to take away the coffee things. It's three o'clock already, and this is Madame's day.

BAST. [*Going up stage.*] That's another idea of theirs, to have coffee served in this little parlor instead of taking it at the dinner table, in order to simplify service. Where have they gone and hidden their cups this time.

JOS. [*Seating herself on the pouf and skimming over one of the books in the package*] Madame's cup, on the mantelpiece, at the right; Monsieur's cup, at the left, on the little table.

BAST. [*Going to the little table in front of the window.*] I see—Not very convenient for touching cups, in a toast. [*Pours out a small glass of liqueur for himself.*]

JOS. [*Still reading the book.*] If master should catch you, sir, drinking his kummel——

BAST. [*Pointing to the door at the rear.*] There's no danger! He's there, in his room, taking his afternoon snore and making billiard balls and napkin rings—Don't talk to me about *him*!—one of the richest land-owners in Rheims! [*Drinking down and going over to JOSEPHA.*] You're the one that's going to get yourself caught, sticking your nose into Madame's books!

JOS. Bah! She's in her room, as he's in his!

BAST. She—is taking a snooze too ?

JOS. It's quite possible. She's bored enough for that.

BAST. I believe it, with such a husband, always monkeying with his locks, his clocks, his bells—fine household !

[*Goes and places his glass on the little table.*]

JOS. [*Still reading.*] They're all like that !

BAST. [*Coming down to a position near her.*] Oh, Josepha, not ours !—If you would only have me for a husband !—We would be touching cups all the time, we would never be snoozing !

JOS. Yes, for six months, and then——

BAST. A year, Josepha, one year guaranteed !

JOS. [*Turning toward him.*] And afterward ?

BAST. Afterward ?

JOS. Yes.

BAST. [*Coming down.*] Oh, well, jiminy, afterward.

JOS. [*Rising.*] There you are. That's the trouble with marriage. It's too long, all that fiddle-faddle. People ought to get married for a year, eighteen months, two years at most, and then—change hands !

BAST. Oh, Josepha, that is the ideal. You ask too much.

JOS. They'll come to that, you wait. All we need here in France is the right of divorce. Now listen to this : [*Reading.*] “ That which alienates so many people from the idea of marriage is the impossibility of getting out of it when one is in.”

BAST. That hits the nailsquare on the head, eh ?

JOS. And it's true.

BAST. Who is it that says that ?

JOS. [*Looking at the cover.*] It's Monsieur Didon

—No, it's old Naquet! [*She places the book on the table.*] Consequently, until the new law of divorce is adopted, don't talk marriage to me. I want to see a way to get out of it!

BAST. Very well, don't let's talk marriage, Josepha! —Let's talk love!—free love!—There you have the beginning and the end, both together! [*He makes a movement to embrace her.*]

JOS. [*Squirming away.*] You—you'll quit that, or I'll box your ears!

BAST. Well, people do such things!

JOS. Sh! Somebody's peeping through the window!

BAST. [*Lowering his voice.*] The cousin?

JOS. Monsieur Adhemar? No; he wouldn't risk it at this hour. [*Turning toward the window, where the face of the janitor appears.*] Take care! It's the janitor.

Janitor. [*Without.*] Monsieur Bastien.

BAST. [*Going to open the window.*] Hey, what are you doing there, you, instead of coming in through the door as you should?

JAN. [*Sticking his head in through the window.*] Won't open, Monsieur Bastien.

BAST. The garden door?

JAN. It won't open.

BAST. [*Going to the door at right and trying to open it.*] It's true!—locked.

JOS. That's the master's work, of course.

BAST. [*In stage whisper.*] Perhaps he has a notion the cousin comes in that way.

JOS. Be quiet, you! [*Aloud, to janitor.*] What is it that brings you here?

BAST. Yes, what is it that brings you?

JAN. [*Passing the papers through the window.*] The Paris papers.

[BASTIEN *hands the papers to* JOSEPHA.]

JOS. Ah! Very well; give them here—Madame has been waiting for them long enough—She has asked for them three times.

BAST. And Monsieur, too.

JOS. All right, thanks.

BAST. [*Closing the window.*] Yes, that will do.

JOS. [*Unfolding one of the papers, without destroying the outer band.*] What can there be in these papers that interests them so?

[*She goes and sits down in the sofa at left.*]

BAST. [*Coming to her.*] Some vitriol-throwing affair.

JOS. [*Seated on the sofa.*] Let's look and see.

BAST. [*Kneeling upon the chair, above JOSEPHA and leaning over her.*] Yes. Let's look over the news—sporting page——

JOS. I beg your pardon—first the financial news. English consols—gone up $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

BAST. And the Hungary wheat—what is it doing?

JOS. 94, 95.

BAST. Great! And the races?

JOS. I care a pile for the races! [*Looking at the first page of the paper.*] Ah!

BAST. What?

JOS. I understand now.

BAST. What?

JOS. Why Madame and the master are so anxious to see the papers. [*Reading.*] "If, as is believed, the chamber will to-day discuss the report of the Divorce Commission, a debate of the most lively and interesting kind can be expected."

BAST. Oh! Yes——

JOS. Be quiet, will you? [*BASTIEN replaces the chair behind the sofa and comes down again, taking a position at JOSEPHA'S left. She reads.*] "In all probability the vote——"

DES PRUNELLES. [*From behind the door at back leading to his room.*] Bastien!

BAST. Sounds like suspicion!—Monsieur. [*He goes up stage.*]

JOS. [*Rising quickly and arranging all the papers.*] Oh, botheration!

BAST. [*Taking the coffee cup from the mantelpiece.*] Hide them, hide them! We'll read the whole thing.

JOS. Yes. [*She conceals the papers behind her.* Enter DES PRUNELLES.]

DES PR. [*Coming out of his study by the door that opens on the scene.*] Bastien.

BAST. Yes, sir.

DES PR. Haven't the Paris papers come yet?

BAST. [*Going to take the cup which is on the right side of the stage.*] No, sir.

DES PR. And it is half-past three?

BAST. If you want me to go and look in the janitor's rooms, sir——

DES PR. Yes, do so. [*Exit BASTIEN left rear carrying the platter with the cups. Aside.*] What are they sneaking around here for, I wonder? [*To JOSEPHA, brusquely.*] What are you doing here, anyway?

JOS. [*In front of the mantelpiece, pretending to be much engrossed with the condition of the clock.*] The clock is stopped, sir, and I was looking——

DES PR. Keep your hands off it, that's my affair! Don't you know that I don't want anyone to touch my clocks?

JOS. And the bells! Since this morning I don't know what's got into them, those bells!

DES PR. [*Suddenly.*] Yes, yes, I know. They don't ring. Keep your hands off them!

JOS. Ah! Monsieur has observed?—

DES PR. Yes, I'll attend to that. [*Exit JOSEPHA L. 2 E. Bell rings.*] Ah—fine, a visit—already!—for Madame!

BAST. [*Reappearing with a card upon a salver.*] It is for Monsieur.

DES PR. [*Taking the card.*] And those papers?

BAST. Not come yet, sir.

DES PR. [*Looking at the card.*] Clavignac! Tell the gentleman to come in.

[*Exit BASTIEN. Enter CLAVIGNAC.*]

DES PR. Well! What in the name of wonder brings him to Rheims?

CLAV. [*Gaily coming down.*] Well, here I am, in Rheims!

DES PR. [*Grasping his hand.*] Why, everybody thought you were dead. Where the devil do you come from?

CLAV. [*Putting his hat on the table.*] From Spain.

DES PR. Spain?

CLAV. Took a walk.

DES PR. Lucky man, you are free, you are; you're a bachelor again.

CLAV. [*Taking the tabaret from under the table and seating himself.*] No; merely a grass widower.

DES PR. [*Moving the pouf a little to the left and sitting down near CLAVIGNAC.*] It's the same thing.

CLAV. Oh, no; not by a long shot. My wife still finds plenty of ways to get me crazy.—By the way, your own wife is well, I hope?

DES PR. Oh, yes. And how does Madame Clavignac contrive to make you crazy, as you say?

CLAV. I am giving her alimony, you know. And it's not fair! For the compromising situation I found her in shows very well that she would be able to get along without me; do you understand? Well, anyway, it's settled, so let's not talk any more about that. I'm paying right along—but my wife finds the alimony too small, and in order to get more money she cooked up a ferocious scheme. Whenever I take up my abode at any point, inland watering-place, seashore resort, winter resort, and such places—she comes up with some idiot or other—and then the scandals—and the gossip! People look at me with a grin, the local papers echo the praises of the lover, go over the old lawsuit again. That annoys me beyond measure, of course. I get someone to go and beg her to get out of town. She says, "Oh, quite willingly; but first he must pay my moving and traveling expenses, my hotel-bill, dressmakers' bills, and so on." Then comes the note, ten, twelve thousand francs—I pay it. She skips—and the trick is turned!

DES PR. Then, did she follow you into Spain?

CLAV. Oh, no! That's where I worked my own little game. I had someone go and tell her—in confidence, you know—that in order to escape her I was going to pass the winter in Algiers. And probably on this very day she will disembark on the shore of Africa! That's my revenge!

DES PR. So you intend to stay here—how long?

CLAV. Twenty-four hours.

DES PR. No longer?

CLAV. No; just time enough to get the rent-money from my farms and flat properties and to take certain papers to my lawyer.

DES PR. You've got a lawsuit?

CLAV. No; but the divorce bill will pass, and

you can readily conceive that I'm anxious to widen the abyss between Madame Clavignac and myself. Once divorced, she can be as much of a she-devil as she pleases. If she wants me to, I'll help her.

DES PR. Then, you think the divorce bill will pass?

CLAV. I hope so at least.

DES PR. If one only knew positively, eh? Will you dine with me?

CLAV. No! You're going to dine with me!

DES PR. What!

CLAV. This morning, when we ate breakfast at the club, Loisel, Tarentin and I made up a party to eat to-night at the café, bachelor-fashion, as in the good old days. I'm to be the host of the occasion.

DES PR. What, I? Now?

CLAV. [*Rising and taking his hat off the table.*] Come! it will rejuvenate you! I'm leaving you now to go and invite the ladies. This evening at Dagneau's place, the *Grand Vatel*, half-past seven—is it all right?

DES PR. [*Rising and passing over toward the left.*] It isn't all right at all! I can't dine with you.

CLAV. [*About to go out, stops short.*] Oh, come off!

DES PR. On my word of honor——

CLAV. You aren't going to try to make me gulp down that insult, are you?

DES PR. Honestly, I can't be with you.

CLAV. [*Coming down a little way.*] Ah, don't be stubborn, old man! or I'll send you my seconds.

DES PR. Very well—it's about what I'm looking for!

CLAV. What? a duel?

DES PR. Very likely.

CLAV. You?

DES PR. Yes, I.

CLAV. [*Lowering his voice.*] And on account of your——

DES PR. Exactly.

CLAV. [*Coming down right.*] Oh, ho! But if that's the case, let's be serious, and tell me about it. If there's anyone who understand you—it's I.

DES PR. [*Placing both his hands on CLAVIGNAC'S shoulders and making him sit down on the pouf.*] Ah, my fine old friend, when we married we both did——

CLAV. A fine piece of business, I'll admit.

DES PR. [*Seating himself on the tabaret.*] But as for you, you deserved your fate.

CLAV. Thanks.

DES PR. You married a coquette, to whom the boys used to send love epistles in rubber balls over the walls of the convent school. And she answered them!

CLAV. And you didn't tell me about it, before I married her?

DES PR. Be just. You didn't consult me.

CLAV. That's true!

DES PR. While on the other hand, I married a modest young girl, well brought up. You know that better than anyone. You lived in her house. A little lively perhaps.

CLAV. You bet! She handed out boxes on the ear to all her maids.

DES PR. And you never told me about that?

CLAV. Be just. You didn't ask me.

DES PR. In short, all things promised happiness, and after a youth that was a little—ah—stormy—the peace that I so well deserved——

CLAV. Instead of coming into port——

DES PR. Ah, my dear friend,, it is the open sea with all its tempests !

CLAV. Caused by what ?

DES PR. Who knows ? One formula sums up everything—incompatibility of temper ! Madame wants to go out, Monsieur would stay at home. One freezes while the other suffocates. She gets up when he sleeps. In brief : we are agreed on one point only—the necessity of separation. You can get a very good idea of the state of my household from a fable of Florian's, "The Rabbit and the Duck !" The rabbit and the duck were married. It was idiotic ! But what can you do ?

CLAV. My case exactly !

DES PR. Weave into this story the arrival of a stupid dandy, embellished with irresistible cravats and dowered by nature with that fine perfume of stupidity that women inhale with drunken joy : "Ah ! what a beauty he is and what a cipher ! He will be all mine and I shall be his all in all !" Add to this that the insipid beauty is my cousin.

CLAV. Adhemar !

DES PR. [*Rising.*] The handsome Adhemar ! now a government forester. He comes here with his military boots on, and makes a big noise with his spurs and cracks his whip. Imagine what kind of a figure I cut alongside of that musketeer !

CLAV. [*Rising.*] That's another fable : "The Centaur and the Minotaur"—and you're the centaur.

DES PR. No ! Not yet.

CLAV. Hm !

DES PR. No, no ! there are still two reassuring symptoms.

CLAV. And they are——

DES PR. In the first place, Madame Des Prunelles always exhibits a dogged disposition when she is in my company. When she begins to be charming, then I'll know what I am.

CLAV. Correct reasoning.

DES PR. And then, she is completely taken up with the idea of divorce—which proves that she has not yet made the fatal step. When she does make it, devil of a pile she'll care about divorce.

CLAV. Ah! Has she told you about this?

DES PR. [*Pointing to the books on the table.*] No, but her choice of literary food—Look here; a digest of the laws of France. [*He picks up the books, pamphlets, etc.*] “Part VI: Divorce.” And every thing here—divorce, divorce, divorce! And pored over! annotated, underlined! dog-eared on every leaf!

CLAV. Why, poor chap, you must defend yourself.

DES PR. Until the last cartridge is gone! But I am quite sick. Oh, how I suffer, my dear, dear friend! The catastrophe hangs over my head. I see it coming, I feel it—and that's what prevents me from dining with you. A single moment off my guard, and I am lost!

CLAV. If it's foreordained, you'll have a fine time warding it off!

DES PR. And for that reason I'm going to bring matters to a head by a *coup d'état*.

CLAV. To-day?

DES PR. [*Leading him toward the right.*] Right off! I have informed Madame that the visits of that animal are odious to me, and that while I am tolerating him, as a cousin, on Sundays and holidays—on every other occasion I would throw him out of the window. Then came the scene which is familiar

to you, and all the regulation threadbare tricks. "I suppose there was nothing left for you to do, sir, but to insult your wife—"

DES PR. } [*Together.*] "By unjust suspicions!"
CLAV. }

DES PR. "And you deserve well enough."

DES PR. } [*Together.*] "That I should justify
CLAV. } them!"

DES PR. I have stuck to my determination. Mr. Adhemar has ceased to appear publicly except on our regular "at home" days. But as soon as my back is turned he runs in through the garden; for he has rented a room, the blackguard, over there, directly across the street from my house! [*He goes up stage and points to the right.*]

CLAV. [*Following him.*] And now what?

DES PR. And now, with the aid of my abilities as a mechanic, I have prepared, in the silence of the night, a little trap in which I will catch Mr. Man this afternoon. Then he gets angry! I pull his ears! He calls me out! We fight!

CLAV. And he kills you!

DES PR. And then—I'm at rest!

CLAV. And this mouse-trap consists in——?

DES PR. Oh, simple enough—a secret spring operated by a button.—Hush! here she comes!

CLAV. Your wife? [*CYPRIENNE appears at rear, in the vestibule, followed by JOSEPHA, to whom she gives an order, manifesting in her gestures a certain discontent.*]

DES PR. Oh! my goodness!

CLAV. What's the matter?

DES PR. Isn't she smiling?

CLAV. No! not by a long shot.

DES PR. Are you sure?

CLAV. Sure? Jiminy, yes.

DES PR. [*Brightening up.*] Oh, my friend! so much the better; you reassure me.

[*Exit JOSEPHA. CYPRIENNE comes down.*]

CLAV. [*Bowing to CYPRIENNE.*] Dear lady——

CYPR. Monsieur Clavignac—How nice of you.

CLAV. While stopping at Rheims, I made it my first duty to present my homage to you.

CYPR. I shan't ask you how is Madame Clavignac.

CLAV. You are too kind.

CYPR. Still separated?

CLAV. Quite so.

CYPR. My compliments—to both of you! [*She goes up stage, left.*]

DES PR. [*In a low voice, to CLAVIGNAC.*] There you are!

CLAV. She's quite acid.

DES PR. [*As before.*] That's nothing. Wait a bit.

[*BAFOURDIN appears.*]

BASTIEN. [*Announcing, at rear.*] Monsieur Bafourdin.

BAFOURDIN. [*Dignified and ceremonious.*] Dearest lady——

CYPR. How do you do, Monsieur Bafourdin? I hope you are well?

BAF. A thousand thanks! [*He passes over to the left.*]

DES PR. [*Shaking hands with him.*] Delighted to see you. [*Presenting CLAVIGNAC.*] Monsieur Bafourdin, collector of customs.

CLAV. Charmed.

MADAME DE BRIONNE. [*Entering, to BASTIEN,*

who is about to announce her.] Don't announce me. I am a member of this household.

CYPR. [*Grasping her hand.*] You're well, I hope?

MME DE B. Yes, dear. [*They come down left; MADAME DE BRIONNE going toward DES PRUNELLES, who is coming to meet her and gives her a hearty handshake.*] How do you do, howdedo, neighbor. [*Passing in front of DES PRUNELLES to go to BAFOURDIN.*] How do you do, Monsieur Bafourdin. [*Passing in front of BAFOURDIN to go to CLAVIGNAC.*] Well! So you're resuscitated, are you?

[*During this short aside between MADAME DE BRIONNE and CLAVIGNAC, BAFOURDIN seats himself upon the couch, DES PRUNELLES places the tabaret under the table, takes the books and carries them to the little table near the window, while CYPRIENNE places the pamphlets on the mantelpiece. During the same time JOSEPHA enters left with a platter full of tea things, puts it on the table, pushes up to the table the arm-chair that is at its left, and exit.*]

CLAV. One would come back from anywhere to see you. And so you're still a widow?

MME DE B. Still—And you? Are you a widower?

CLAV. Not yet.

MME DE B. [*Laughing.*] Too bad; we might unite our two solitudes.

CLAV. [*Quickly.*] It isn't necessary that I be a widower for that!

MME DE B. [*Laughing.*] Oh, no, it's a husband that I want.

CYPR. [*Calling her as she is preparing the tea in front of the table.*] Estelle!

MME DE B. [*Approaching her.*] My dear Cyprienne!

CLAV. [*To DES PRUNELLES, alone with him, right.*] Why is it that that pretty little woman hasn't got another husband yet?

DES PR. It's not the wish she lacks; it's the money.

[ADHEMAR appears.]

BAST. [*Announcing.*] Monsieur Adhemar de Gratignan.

[CYPRIENNE, alone in front of the table where she is pouring out the tea, starts.]

DES PR. [*In a low tone to CLAVIGNAC.*] There's the bird!

ADHEMAR. [*Coming down left to CYPRIENNE and pressing her hand.*] My dear cousin, you have been well [*with affectation*] since last Monday?

CYPR. [*Rather excitedly.*] Thank you, fairly well!

DES PR. [*In a low voice, to CLAVIGNAC.*] The mountebank! they see each other every day.

[ADHEMAR bows to him. DES PRUNELLES makes believe he does not see him. CLAVIGNAC goes to talk with MADAME DE BRIONNE at rear, right.]

BAFOURDIN. [*Standing up, with a cup of tea which CYPRIENNE has handed him.*] So you are going to leave us, are you, Monsieur de Gratignan?

ADHE. [*Apart, annoyed.*] Ah! fine thing——

[CYPRIENNE who was standing in front of the table pouring out some tea, turns around with a start.

DES PRUNELLES, who had gone up stage with CLAVIGNAC, stands still and listens.]

CYPR. Leave us? [*To ADHEMAR.*] You are going away?

ADHE. [*Excitedly.*] Why, no; no, certainly not.

BAF. I read this morning in the Rheims Independent that you had been appointed sub-forest-inspector at Arcachon.

CYPR. [*Worried and disturbed by the presence of her husband.*] And we haven't been told a thing about it?

ADHE. Quite so. I came to tell you that this position had been offered me—but I refused it.

DES PR. Refused advancement?

ADHE. So that I might remain in the bosom of my family. [*He goes to place his hat on the mantel-piece and comes down again.*]

DES PR. [*Aside, to CLAVIGNAC.*] Hear that? Hear that? There's going to be a duel!

MME DE B. [*At rear, looking at an art object attached to the wall.*] Monsieur Des Prunelles——

DES PR. Madame. [*He approaches her.*]

MME DE B. That dragon is Chinese, isn't it?

DES PR. Japanese. [*They continue speaking at rear, right.*] BAFOURDIN *has sat down again on the the couch.*]

CYPR. [*Profiting by the remoteness of everybody else, aside, to ADHEMAR, as she comes down to bring him the cup of tea that she has just prepared and which she stirs with a sentimental air.*] And it is all for my sake? I do not want you to make this sacrifice, my dear friend. You must accept.

ADHE. [*In a stage whisper, as he takes the tea.*] Leave you, Cyprienne? I'd die first! [*He drinks.*]

CYPR. [*Same tone.*] I must speak to you—at once!

ADHE. At my apartments?

CYPR. [*Quickly.*] Your apartments? Never! Later—perhaps I won't say no.

ADHE. Why not now?

CYPR. No, no! Here! Come when you see the signal.

ADHE. But——

CYPR. Hush! Someone is looking. [*Aloud.*] Monsieur de Clavignac, don't you drink tea?

[CLAVIGNAC and DES PRUNELLES come down, right.

MADAME DE BRIONNE takes a copy of the "*Vie Parisienne*" off the little table and reads it, rear.]

ADHE. [*Alone, left front, drinking the cup of tea, apart.*] Accept it? it's done already. I'm no fool. But I'm soon to go; and I'll have to hurry matters!

BAST. [*Announcing.*] Mademoiselle de Lusignan. [*Enter MADEMOISELLE DE LUSIGNAN.*]

CLAV. [*To DES PRUNELLES.*] Still a spinster?

DES PR. More so every day! And caustic!

CYPR. [*Who has gone to meet MADEMOISELLE DE LUSIGNAN.*] How lovely of you, my dear neighbor—[*She takes her over behind the couch, toward the light, offers her the chair near the table and stays there to talk with BAFOURDIN behind the table.*]

MADMOISELLE DE LUSIGNAN. [*After having shaken hands with CYPRIENNE, bows to MADAME DE BRIONNE, without stopping.*] Isn't Monsieur de Gratignan here?

ADHE. Begging your pardon——

MLLE DE L. [*Passing in front of the table and going toward him.*] So glad to see you! I saw you running from my window. I said "How do you do?" but you didn't hear me, you were running so fast—[*Going to shake hands with DES PRUNELLES.*—that I said to myself: "Evidently he's going to visit

his cousin Cyprienne!" [*She seats herself in the small chair at right of the table.*]

CLAV. [*Aside, to DES PRUNELLES.*] Fine talk!

CYPR. [*Hastily, in order to change the current of the conversation, to BAFOURDIN.*] Isn't Madame Bafourdin coming?

BAF. A slight indisposition forces her to stay at home.

MME DE B. [*Coming down, with the "Vie Parisienne" in her hands, and sitting on the pouf, after having moved it a little to the right with the aid of CLAVIGNAC.*] Here's the news of the Chamber of Deputies. By the way, isn't it to-day that they will discuss that much-talked-of divorce bill?

ADHE. It certainly is to-day.

DES PR. [*To CLAVIGNAC.*] Now listen! [*He goes over and sits in the arm-chair at the extreme right. CLAVIGNAC takes the chair that is near the fauteuil and sits down between him and MADAME DE BRIONNE.*]

CYPR. [*Behind the table, right, serving a cup of tea to Mlle de Lusignan.*] Yes—it is to-day that our representatives will deign to consider the question.

Mlle de L. Do you think the bill will pass?

CYPR. If all the Deputies that have a personal interest in it——

BAF. It is the will of the people!

CYPR. Oh! undoubtedly.

ADHE. [*Approaching the table.*] All the men!

CYPR. }
MME DE B. } And all the women!

CLAV. [*To MADAME DE BRIONNE, who keeps on reading the "Vie Parisienne."*] What, you too? What use can it be to you? You're a widow.

MME DE B. [*Laughing.*] Why, it would put

husbands back in circulation; I should have a wider field of choice.

BAST. [*Announcing.*] Madame de Valfontaine.

[*Enter MADAME DE VALFONTAINE. DES PRUNELLES and CLAVIGNAC rise to bow to her, then sit down again.*]

CYPR. [*Going toward her and bringing her down toward the left.*] Oh, I am quite sure that Clarisse is also for it!

MME DE V. [*Shakes hands with her, makes a sign of friendship to ADHEMAR and crosses in front of the table to shake hands with MADAME DE BRIONNE.*] For what?

CYPR. For the divorce bill! [*She pushes the sofa at left, leaving a good-sized space between the table and the sofa.*]

MME DE V. Oh, horrors, no! [*She shakes hands with ADHEMAR.*]

ALL. [*Surprised.*] Phew!

CLAV. [*To DES PRUNELLES.*] What do you think of that?

DES PR. [*In a stage whisper.*] She gets along so well without it!

CLAV. [*Same tone.*] Is that so?

CYPR. [*Offering her the sofa at left.*] What! My dear beauty, are you against it?

MME DE V. [*Sitting down on the sofa while CYPRIENNE pours her out a cup of tea.*] Why, look here, it's the height of abomination, this divorce. If people are married for life, they become resigned to their fate, they make concessions—While if they had the hope of a divorce, they would carry things beyond all endurance, in order to reach a rupture of relations as soon as possible! In plain language, it would mean the end of the marriage relation.

MLLE DE L. So much the better, then!

ALL. Oh, mademoiselle!

[CYPRIENNE brings the cup of tea to MME DE VAL-FONTAINE, and ADHEMAR profits by this action by seeking to grasp CYPRIENNE'S hand behind the sofa.]

MLLE DE L. [Noticing the little by-play.] Then we shan't see all the horrible things that marriage displays before our eyes!

[ADHEMAR and CYPRIENNE hastily move away from one another. CYPRIENNE goes up stage and listens to what follows, leaning behind the couch, between BAFOURDIN and MLLE DE LUSIGNAN.]

MME DE V. [In a stage whisper, to ADHEMAR, who again goes to the extreme left.] That was too plain.

BAFOURDIN. [Rising, without quitting his position.] I beg Madame's pardon, but I think that, far from deterring people from marriage, the possibility of divorce is, quite on the contrary, an encouragement—because it offers a chance of getting out again! [Sits down.]

CLAV. Right, by jingo! Marriage, as it is now, is a sort of blind alley. Divorce opens up a passage.

BAF. And a man who might fear to enter the blind alley——

CLAV. Would gladly take the risk in the open thoroughfare.

MME DE V. Open thoroughfare! That's exactly the right name for it! it would be nothing more or less than an open thoroughfare! It's indecent!

ALL. Oh! Indecent?

ADHE. And very agreeable! [*He takes MME DE V.'s cup from her and places it on the table.*]

MLLE DE L. [*Maliciously.*] And all this time Monsieur Des Prunelles stays in his corner saying nothing? [*Everyone looks at DES PRUNELLES.*]

DES PR. Oh! Well, regarding it as a question of principle, I am opposed to divorce.

ALL. [*Surprised.*] Oh!

DES PR. But in its practical aspect I find it excellent.

CLAV. }

ADHE. } Just like everybody else.

BAF. }

ADHE. Do you want to know what feature of the divorce I consider admirable?

ALL. What's that?

ADHE. Why, it suppresses assassination! Nowadays a luckless young gentleman can't forget himself with an unhappy young wife without the whole world shouting to the husband: "Kill them!"

MME DE B. [*Thoughtlessly.*] Oh! People never tell him that!

ADHE. What? Don't they tell him: "Kill him! Kill her? Kill them?"

MME DE B. [*Laughing.*] Oh, I understood you well enough.

ADHE. And the murderous fellow shoots—bing, bang! Think of it! Why, it's barbarous! It does not belong to this enlightened age! And why does this massacre have to take place? Because there is no other way to get rid of the wife and her lover. Let him be given the right of divorce!

CLAV. And then you would have nothing more to fear!

ADHE. There you are! I wouldn't have——

[*Correcting himself.*] There wouldn't be anything more to fear!

CLAV. And then all the husband would have to do would be to sling his wife into your arms in order to be avenged!

ADHE. There you are! That is——

CLAV. Yes, yes. Just so.

DES PR. [*Apart.*] What an idiot!

[ADHEMAR goes up and stands between MADAME DE VALFONTAINE'S sofa and the table.]

CYPR. [*Approaching CLAVIGNAC.*] Revenged? Beg pardon, did you say revenged? And revenged for what, if you please?

DES PR. [*Rising and addressing himself to CYPRIENNE over the head of CLAVIGNAC, who is seated.*] Why, for the crime, Madame, for the crime that the woman committed!

CYPR. Crime?

DES PR. Indiscretion, if that word suits you better.

CYPR. Indiscretion! But, Monsieur, if there is a divorce law, there is no such thing as an indiscretion, since it is then possible to make amends for it.

CLAV. [*Feeling uncomfortable between them, rises and moves off.*] Yes, that's another aspect of the question. [*He quietly puts his chair back in place.*]

DES PR. [*Coming down to CYPRIENNE, who is also coming down.*] And the husband's honor, Madame? [*Still coming down.*]

CYPR. [*To DES PRUNELLES, over MADAME DE BRIONNE'S head.*] Well, Monsieur, the divorce hands his honor back to him, intact, and as good as new! What can he have to complain of then?

ADHE. [*Chiming in.*] Not a thing, by Jehosaphat !

[MADAME DE BRIONNE *has arisen discreetly and gone to join CLAVIGNAC at rear, right.*]

CYPR. [*In the center of the stage.*] Oh, of course, I can understand that a virtuous woman, enchained by a perpetual marriage, will stifle the outbursts of her heart, subdue her passion, and say to him that she loves : [*Directing her remarks toward ADHEMAR.*] "No, I will not transgress ! For if we were discovered, there would be a scandal, dishonor, death perhaps !" But with a divorce law——[*Gaily.*] "Very well, Monsieur, I have deceived you. Let's secure a divorce, that will be all there is to it, and we'll talk no more of the matter." There ! isn't that loyal ? Isn't it frank, isn't it on the square ? What more could anyone want ?

DES PR. [*Approaching her.*] Quite so. And, as a consequence, no more scruples, no more hesitation, eh ? Fine sort of morality !

CYPR. Oh, well, Monsieur, if you don't see that the lofty morality of divorce consists in that very facility in atoning for an indiscretion——

DES PR. [*Exasperated.*] Which encourages committing it !

CLAV. } Don't get excited ! Calm your-
MME DE B. } selves !

[*All present have arisen. MADAME DE BRIONNE, Mlle DE LUSIGNAN and MADAME DE VAL-FONTAINE go up stage and shake hands with CYPRIENNE, who has gone to join them. BAFOURDIN goes to get his hat, rear. CLAVIGNAC at right, is trying to calm DES PRUNELLES.*]

ADHE. [*Aside, as he reaches the center of stage.*]

Excellent! If that's all that restrains her—I've got her, I've got her! [*Aloud.*] And only to think that while we are here discussing the law, the chamber of deputies has perhaps passed it already.

MME DE V. Or rejected it!

BAFOURDIN. [*Behind the couch.*] In either case, we shan't know the result of the vote until late in the evening.

ADHE. Oh, earlier. [*Looking at his watch.*] In an hour you will know it.

ALL. An hour!

ADHE. [*Crosses behind the table, opens the writing case, and speaks while writing.*] Yes—I have a journalistic friend who stands in with the police. I'm going to wire him at Chalons to telegraph back the news, as soon as he gets it. [*He takes the paper on which he has written.*]

ALL THE WOMEN. Oh, hurry, hurry up, then.

ADHE. I'll send it by telegraph. [*He goes to get his cane and hat.*]

CYPR. [*Accompanying him to the rear.*] And let us know the result——

ADHE. The minute I get it! [*Exit.*]

Mlle DE L. [*Going up to BAFOURDIN, who is getting ready to go out.*] Is Madame Bafourdin opposed to the divorce law, dear Monsieur?

BAF. [*Sarcastically.*] Yes, mademoiselle, and also against spinsterhood!

Mlle DE L. [*Apart.*] The insolent person!

MME DE V. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Au revoir, dearie.

CYPR. Au revoir.

BAF. [*Taking his leave.*] Ladies——[*He goes out with MME DE VALFONTAINE.*]

Mlle DE L. [*Coming down between the table and the couch, to MME DE BRIONNE.*] Are you going, dear madame?

MME DE B. After you, dear mademoiselle.

MLLE DE L. Oh, is your modesty afraid of the compliments that I will give you, after your departure?

MME DE B. [*Laughing.*] No, it's the opposite I'm afraid of. [*She goes up stage beyond the couch.*] Will you come with me in my carriage?

MLLE DE L. With pleasure. [*Aside.*] The little fool!

MME DE B. [*Approaching CYPRIENNE, who has gone up stage toward the right.*] I am offering you up as a sacrifice, my dear. She is going to tell me something bad about you.

CYPR. Let her say it!

MME DE B. Oh, you can depend upon her! [*She bows to DES PRUNELLES and CLAVIGNAC and goes out with MLLE DE LUSIGNAN. JOSEPHA enters, L. 2 E., and places the cups on the platter which she carries.*]

CYPR. [*Coming down, right.*] Won't you stay to dinner, Monsieur Clavignac?

CLAV. Impossible—to my great regret, dear lady. I'm to be at a dinner with some friends this evening.

CYPR. Some other time, then. [*BASTIEN comes out of DES PRUNELLES' study and brings him his hat and great-coat.*] Bastien, bring around the horses, I'm going out. [*She crosses in front of the table and looks for the books and pamphlets on the mantelpiece.*]

BAST. All right, ma'am.

DES PR. [*With his coat half on, to CLAVIGNAC.*] Will you come with me?

CLAV. Where to?

DES PR. The club.

CLAV. Sure.

CYPR. Well, then—if I shan't see you again—

Pleasant journey! [*She holds out her hand to CLAVIGNAC.*]

CLAV. Thank you, thank you.

[*CYPRIENNE enters her apartment.*]

DES PR. [*Crossing in front of CLAVIGNAC and turning toward him, as soon as CYPRIENNE has closed the door. Brusquely.*] Do you comprehend the situation?

CLAV. Not in the least.

DES PR. [*In a whisper.*] I said I was going to the club—but I'm not.—She said she was going out—but she isn't. Adhemar is waiting for the signal at the street corner. [*Crosses over to the right.*] She'll give it, he'll come—And that's where my little mouse-trap comes in. [*He turns the knob of the door at right, which creaks slightly.*] Come into my room. [*He goes up toward the rear, behind the couch.*]

CLAV. [*Going to get his hat.*] Isn't it strange that in every household——

DES PR. Sh! She's listening. [*Aloud, with an air of nonchalance.*] Have a cigar?

CLAV. [*Same tone.*] When we get out in the street.

DES PR. [*Still same tone.*] We're off, then!

CLAV. We're off!

[*MUSIC. They go up to the rear, pretending to go outdoors left, but in the vestibule DES PRUNELLES halts CLAVIGNAC, pushes him to the right into his study and closes the door.*]

CYPR. [*Comes out of her room with precaution, goes and looks around, rear, satisfies herself that they have gone out through the vestibule, then without speak-*

ing pulls the window curtain down all the way.]
 'There! the signal. [*She comes down slowly.*] I've meditated for a long time on the problem: How to do my duty—and at the same time forget it! And I have found a means—it was difficult, but I have found it. I will order Adhemar to stay away until he hears from me—That's for my duty, and—There he is!

ADHE. [*Entering with an air of mystery by the small door at right, to himself.*] The telegram is sent. [*Aloud.*] Alone?

CYPR. Yes. He is at his club. Come in quick!

ADHE. [*Entering.*] Oh Cyprienne! [*The door closes suddenly of its own accord. Immediately there is heard the sound of an electric bell, which continues through the scene. ADHEMAR stands still, astonished.*] Hey?

CYPR. That ring?

ADHE. What is it?

CYPR. [*Terrified.*] I don't know!

ADHE. A telegraph call?

CYPR. Oh, it's awful, monsieur! Go and stop that racket!

ADHE. [*Utterly confounded.*] I was just about to ask you!

CYPR. [*Running to the door.*] Why, it's the door! You can see very well it's the door!

ADHE. [*Follows her.*] The door!

CYPR. Oh! oh! [*She goes up stage behind the couch.*]

ADHE. [*At the door, trying to open it.*] Damn it! The door won't open!

CYPR. Locked!

JOS. [*Entering, L. I E.*] Did you ring, Madame?

CYPR. [*Beside herself.*] No, it isn't I! It's my husband! [*The noise of the bell is reinforced by a*

different ring. CYPRIENNE comes down, right.] A trap! it's a trap! We are caught! Run, run!

ADHE. [*Frightened out of his wits, crosses in front of her.*] Yes, but which way?

CYPR. } [*Pointing to the rear.*] That way!
JOS. }

ADHE. [*Making a complete circle.*] Where do you mean? Where, where?

CYPR. } At the back!
JOS. }

[ADHEMAR rushes toward the rear between the table and the arm-chair, followed by CYPRIENNE. At the moment when he reaches the vestibule, DES PRUNELLES opens the vestibule entrance to the study, rushes in front of him and prevents his egress.]

CYPR. Too late!

[ADHEMAR, terrified, retreats down stage toward the right, DES PRUNELLES following him, lock-step, with a menacing air; then ADHEMAR jumps aside to the left, at the same time that DES PRUNELLES, having reached the door, presses the button. The ringing stops at once.]

ADHE. [*To himself.*] Pinched.

DES PR. [*To JOSEPHA.*] Leave the room now!

JOS. [*Apart.*] A fine howdedo for Madame.
[*Exit L. 1 E.*]

[CYPRIENNE and ADHEMAR stand rooted to the spot.]

DES PR. [*To ADHEMAR.*] We will have a little conversation later, my young friend. Just now, you were about to go out, were you not?

ADHE. [*Stupefied.*] Yes, I believe—I also think I was going—But—what way?

DES PR. [*Opening the door at the right.*] This way.

ADHE. [*Hesitating.*] Without music?

DES PR. Without music!

ADHE. [*Bowing.*] A thousand thanks! [*He rushes out.*]

DES PR. [*Closing the door sharply.*] Au revoir!

CYPR. [*Behind the sofa at left, apart.*] Now for the crisis! It has come, the crisis!

DES PR. [*Approaching CYPRIENNE, and moving the sofa up to the table and making a sign to his wife that she should sit down.*] And now, Madame, let us have a little conversation, if you will! Perhaps you are wondering how I discovered that you are still giving private receptions to your cousin Adhemar, in spite of my having forbidden it?

CYPR. [*Seated.*] No, monsieur.

DES PR. No? Very well, I will tell you. [*Bringing the chair up before the table and sitting.*] Yesterday evening, I was at the club—Adhemar came in, and I heard a little laughing and a few salacious pleasantries. The reason for the hilarity was of the most frivolous kind—a thread of wool that hung to the tail of his coat. Adhemar had just removed the thread, when he saw me, bit his lips, threw the thread on the floor and said, a little too loud and with too great a pretense of nonchalance: "It is quite evident that I have been dining at my sister's!" Then he disappeared. I didn't say a word, but kept my eye on the piece of thread that was lying on the carpet, and when nobody was watching I grabbed it, put it in my pocket,—and here it is! [*CYPRIENNE starts slightly.*] Yes, China rose. [*He rises and goes to the little table near the window, where he takes a skein of wool from the work-basket.*] When I reached home, I went straight to your work-basket,

took this skein of wool—[*Comes back to the table with the skein in one hand and the piece of wool-thread in the other.*—compared the thread with the skein—and the exact similarity is so eloquent of itself that I will not attenuate the effect by a useless commentary!

CYPR. [*Coldly.*] Continue, monsieur.

DES PR. Well, then, since Adhemar has been here, will you be so kind as to tell me why you accept visits from him without my knowledge? What is it that gives motive to and justifies such forgetfulness of your entire duty? I am not a very disagreeable husband nor a very troublesome one. I am not brutal, ill-bred, miserly, nor troublesome. I have made your life the most pleasant and the most care-free in the world. I never show temper. I have simple tastes, I lead a regular life, in fact that's exactly what I married for. I haven't the grace and beauty of a nobleman; but nevertheless my appearance is not without a certain distinction. [*He sits.*] I'm not exactly fiery; but every now and then I have outbursts of amiable tenderness—In short, Madame, I believe, without flattering myself, that I am placing it within your power to be as happy as a woman can be!

CYPR. [*To herself, with a little bitter laugh.*] Ha, ha!

DES PR. I beg your pardon—?

CYPR. That's what I expected from you! Admirable, upon my word! "As happy as a woman can be!" And how do I know that, Monsieur? It is you who say it! But how far does the possibility of a woman's happiness go? Where have I learned it? When? How? With whom?

DES PR. But——

CYPR. To put the matter plainly, Monsieur, when

you say of me, to your friends, "She's a delightful woman!" you are placing me in the scales against others! You have a comparison in your mind! But what terms of comparison have I, to proclaim you a remarkable man?

DES PR. I——

CYPR. No! it's unendurable, the self-assurance you men have!—Oh, you've arranged affairs beautifully to suit yourselves, you men; it's delightful, the world you have made! Delightful—for you!—you are young, you paw the ground, you caper. "Amuse yourself, my dear," says mamma, "it is proper, at your time of life!" "Sow your oats, my lad," says papa, "it will be good for your health!" And monsieur prances, curvets about, from the blonde to the brunette, and then to the auburn-haired! And so it goes. Then, when it has got so far that the gallant steed is used up, "Woof! perhaps I'd better get married!" Then they throw some luckless maid into his arms, some little one all of a tremble, utterly innocent, who has always hung to her mother's apron strings, who knows nothing of life but that it is hidden from her, nothing of natural emotions but that they are forbidden her, nothing of love but what she is able to divine. And monsieur tells her, embracing her somewhat tamely with his tired arms: "My, but aren't you lucky to have stumbled on a jolly dog like me!—No one could love a woman more than I love you; no one embraces more energetically than I embrace you!" And the unfortunate young creature, who finds the clasp a little slack, says to herself, with a sigh: "What! Can it be so? Nothing more than this? And here I was dreaming of——It's very odd! But oh dear——" Well, the girl, if stupid, permits herself to be convinced; if

indifferent, she is resigned to her fate. [*Rises.*] But the woman, the real woman, like me, Monsieur, says to herself: "Pooh! what a farce! There is more than this! And it is not for such a trifle that people become impassioned, ecstatic, even to madness!—to the point of committing crime!—poisoning, murder! For such tame embraces Romeo would not have run the risk of breaking his back by falling from the fourth story, nor would Leander have exposed himself to the danger of drowning, by swimming through stormy seas! The game would not be worth the candle.—There is something else, and much better." And that woman, Monsieur, she investigates, she questions, she studies, she gathers information, and after thorough research and deep study she is in a position to say to you in plain terms: "Look here! [*Striking him on the shoulder.*] You are an impostor! and I have been robbed!"

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Madame!

CYPR. [*Crossing to the right.*] I have been robbed, Monsieur, that's the whole story; I have been robbed! Anyway, it had to be so. Marriage—what is it for you men? You veterans? While for us it is the first campaign! [*Sitting on the pouf.*] In my convent days, what was my virtuous dream? A marriage that would bring to realization all the drunkenness of passion! A husband who would be at one and the same time a hero and my lover! I beheld you in my dreams, young, beautiful, graceful, elegant! now tender, now menacing, now humble, now despotic, and never ceasing to crawl at my feet [*Rising.*] but to rush at me like a tiger! and to bruise my palpitating form with fierce embraces! Ah, ecstatic visions! And instead of their realization, nothing! nothing, and again nothing! Dismal solitude, a bog, with its waters lifeless and stagnant!

The regular "tick, tock" of the domestic cuckoo-clock; the monotonous drone of the conjugal cooking-pot, which I wearily skim, with listless fingers, as it brims over for a moment! And no spice, nothing piquant! Nothing that imparts a relish, whets the appetite, adds a zest! I make appeal to your heart, worn-out, like your stomach, and like it reduced to the use of emollients, and I cry out: "But I, I am young, and in good health, I am! In the name of heaven, Monsieur, some truffles, some champagne, some spices!" You answer: "No, madame, no! Linseed, if you will, spinach and dandelion!" [*She goes and sinks exhausted in the arm-chair, at the extreme right.*]

DES PR. I really don't know what you want. I certainly have done all I could——

CYPR. [*Half rising, then sinking down again and burying her face in the cushions of the chair.*] Ah! —Oh, certainly!—Mother, mother!

DES PR. [*Approaching her.*] Really, you can't expect me to disguise myself as a Calabrian brigand, for the sake of what you call spice, and come into your room by the window!

CYPR. Oh, naturally, Monsieur! Those are things that men do only for their mistresses, when they are young; and you have been too lavish in that line!

DES PR. I?

CYPR. Witness the wardrobe where Monsieur Bafourdin inadvertently locked you up, in his wife's chamber, and you barely escaped suffocation!

DES PR. You knew——

CYPR. [*Rising.*] Or again, the pretty Madame Brignois, to whose apartments you were in the habit of going disguised as a modiste.

DES PR. You are talking ancient history.

CYPR. [*Again crossing to left.*] That is love! romance, adventure! I grant you that!

DES PR. [*Modestly.*] Oh, Lord—

CYPR. But as for me, Monsieur, as for me, I know about all this sort of thing only through hearsay!

DES PR. I rejoice at the thought.

CYPR. —Thanks to our society, which when we are young girls keeps us down; when we are grown women oppresses us; and when we are old ladies—suppresses us!

DES PR. And what is it that you want this poor, luckless society to do?

CYPR. [*Going toward him.*] What I want, Monsieur? I ask that instead of locking up the young girl she be permitted to run about at her ease, like the young man! When she has seen a little of life, she will be fitted to settle down and marry, like you; and you will have a virtuous and faithful wife, for she will no longer have any great curiosity to be satisfied.

DES PR. Where the devil do you draw the inspiration for these beautiful ideas?

CYPR. From my reflections, Monsieur, and from my readings! [*Going to the table at left.*] Read the last book by Monsieur——

DES PR. [*Quickly.*] Heaven bless him? And you think that there can be found a man who is fool enough to marry a young woman under such conditions?

CYPR. [*Behind the arm-chair, with both hands on the back cushion.*] It seems that there are plenty of us women who are fools enough to marry you men under such conditions.

DES PR. [*In front of the table.*] But, holy Moses, Madame, between man and woman there is a tremendous abyss!

CYPR. Yes! It's marriage!

DES PR. Come, come, Madame.

CYPR. [*Coming down.*] Come, come, Monsieur! You represent custom, I stand for progress. We shall never understand each other. A truce with social philosophy, if you please, and let us return to the question.

DES PR. Just so. The question—is Adhemar!

CYPR. It is Adhemar!

DES PR. Your intentions with regard to Adhemar—Pray?

CYPR. I was just about to destroy all his hopes—when you made your absurd entry.

DES PR. I am sorry.

CYPR. You would be no husband, if you didn't do stupid things.

DES PR. Well: to return to the point—

CYPR. Monsieur, I shall be frank.

DES PR. I beg you will be so.

CYPR. If I were not a virtuous woman, after what you have done, your intrusion would be irremediable.

DES PR. Ah!

CYPR. But I am a virtuous woman—unfortunately! Since my infancy, I have been stuffed with a host of false notions, absurd prejudices, of which I haven't yet been able to divest myself; and among other superstitions I am weak enough to accord some importance to the oath of fidelity that I gave you before the mayor. My reason of course tells me that my ignorance was taken advantage of when they drew out of me a promise of which I did not comprehend the full import. Absurd or not, the oath was made; I shall keep it!

DES PR. That's good.

CYPR. Whatever it costs me!

DES PR. That's nothing—provided——

CYPR. But—I give you notice, with the same loyalty, that this fidelity has only a temporary and transitory character!

DES PR. What?

CYPR. For if the divorce bill passes——Oh! la, la, la——

DES PR. Aha!

CYPR. Oh, you know very well, Monsieur, that I am not so stupid as to fail to profit by the means of egress that the legislators are going to open for me. And divorce is an amend for everything!

DES PR. Yes, I am acquainted with the theory.

CYPR. So now you are forewarned!

DES PR. We'll attend to that when the time comes, Madame.—But, in the meantime, no more of Adhemar!

CYPR. Until further orders, certainly, Monsieur.

DES PR. Or I'll chop off his ears, until further orders.

CYPR. People say such things——

DES PR. And people do them!

CYPR. Have we discussed the question sufficiently, Monsieur?

DES PR. Quite!

CYPR. Then, kindly permit me to offer you my salutations.

DES PR. [*Going up toward the rear, right.*] If it pleases you.

CYPR. [*Reaching the right.*] It pleases me greatly.

DES PR. [*Bowing.*] Madame.

CYPR. [*Same play.*] Monsieur.

[*She enters her room, left front, at the same moment that DES PRUNELLES enters his study, right rear,*

both closing their doors violently. As soon as they are out, ADHEMAR very softly opens the little garden door and pokes in his head with precaution; after which he crosses the threshold without letting go of the door, for fear that the bell may start ringing, and thus he is only about three-quarters inside. At the same moment JOSEPHA comes in at rear to seek her mistress.]

ADHE. [*Pointing to the door of DES PRUNELLES' study.*] He has entered his study. [*Noticing JOSEPHA and calling her in a whisper.*] Josepha!

JOS. Oh!

ADHE. [*Whispering.*] Be still!

JOS. [*Frightened, in the same tone.*] But the bell! the door!

ADHE. No, it rings only when it is closed. I'm holding it. Where's your mistress?

JOS. In her room.

ADHE. Tell her to come!

JOS. But——

ADHE. Hurry, hurry! It's urgent! Go, or you'll ruin it all!

JOS. I'll fly! [*She goes out L. 1 E.*]

ADHE. [*Alone. He advances a little further on to the stage, taking endless precautions to prevent the door closing.*] Ah, you take recourse to electricity, crafty husband! Very well, I also play with electricity! The telegraph is my accomplice! I telegraphed to Dumoulin and dictated to him the response he was to make, justifying this act by the words: "This is a part of a neat little farce!"—An infernal farce! [*He makes a gesture, the door slips out of his grasp and begins to close. He catches it in the nick of time.*] Phew, that was a narrow escape! [*Returning to his previous remarks.*] Infernal, I say! Dumoulin

answered on the spot. Here's his telegram. [*He draws it out of his pocket.*] That settles matters! Now she can't hide behind vain scruples! She is mine, oh happiness! [*Same trouble with the door.*] Damn! [*He catches it.*] Jumping jiminy! but this is annoying!

CYPR. [*Coming out of her apartment, but remaining near her door for fear of being surprised by her husband.*] You here?

ADHE. [*Same position at right, for fear that the door might close.*] Yes!

CYPR. Again?

ADHE. Always!

CYPR. The bell?

ADHE. [*Pointing to his foot, which prevents the door from closing.*] No, my foot——

CYPR. [*Pointing to the door at rear, right.*] My husband!—Come later!

ADHE. Never!

CYPR. What?

ADHE. You will come to see me.

CYPR. To your apartment?

ADHE. What was it that you yourself said, O my angel? “When the divorce law is in force, there will be no infidelity!”

CYPR. Yes.

ADHE. If they pass that law, no virtuous woman will hesitate to deceive her husband!”

CYPR. Yes!—Ah, beautiful dream!

ADHE. Reality!

CYPR. What?

ADHE. It is accomplished!

CYPR. The divorce law?

ADHE. Adopted!

CYPR. Ah!

ADHE. Here, look! [*He holds out the telegram*

and, to shorten the distance, holds back the door with his cane and makes a big lunge forward.]

CYPR. [*Alarmed.*] The door!

ADHE. [*Same play.*] No, my cane!—I am reaching.—Read it!

CYPR. [*Advancing between the table and the couch, seizes the telegram and reads it.*] “Divorce bill passed! — Enormous majority! — Dumoulin!” — Free! [*The voice of DES PRUNELLES is heard. Music.*] Run! [*She rushes quickly to the door, leaving the telegram on the table.*]

ADHE. [*Who has reached the door at right and is ready to go out.*] In my apartment! I shall expect you!

CYPR. [*Same position, door at left.*] Now?

ADHE. Immediately.

CYPR. But!——

ADHE. Divorce!——

CYPR. Still——

ADHE. Redeems!——

CYPR. Well?——

ADHE. Accomplish it!

CYPR. I will! [*She rushes into her room.*]

ADHE. [*Radiant, rushing out.*] Ah! [*The door closes and the bell starts again.*]

DES PR. [*Opening his door violently and precipitating himself into the room followed by CLAVIGNAC.*] Infamous! He has been here!

CLAV. [*Astounded.*] That bell!

DES PR. [*Stopping the noise. Music ceases.*] His funeral knell!

CLAV. Henri!

DES PR. [*Beside himself, coming down.*] His life! I'll have his life!

CLAV. Calm yourself!

DES PR. [*Seated at the right of the table, rings*

the annunciator.] Jump into the carriage and hand that blackguard my card! [*He writes feverishly.*] "Wretch! One of us is in the way! It's you!"

CLAV. [*Near him, behind the table.*] Ah! permit me——

DES PR. "It's you!" Where is the ink? My fury blinds me. Ink! Ink! [*Trying to reach the ink-well, he digs his pen into the telegram and lifting the pen brings the telegram within reading distance.*] A telegram? [*Enter JOSEPHA and BASTIEN. He reads.*] "Dumoulin to Adhemar." [*He rises, passes to the right, reads the telegram to himself and looks at the door at right with an outburst of sardonic laughter.*] Ha, ha, ha! Thief! Forger! Fie! This ruse in order to—[*Starting, with a cry of terror.*] God! [*He runs toward JOSEPHA, who is at left, in front of the door to her mistress's chamber.*]

CLAV. }
THE SERVANTS. } [*Frightened.*] What's the matter?

DES PR. [*To JOSEPHA, grasping her fist and pointing with anxiety to CYPRIENNE'S chamber.*] Where is Madame?

JOS. [*Alarmed.*] Madame is dressing to go out!

DES PR. [*To himself.*] Woof! just in time! She was about to go there! [*To JOSEPHA.*] Get out of here, you! [*JOSEPHA rushes out. BASTIEN is about to follow her.*] Stay right here! [*BASTIEN halts, DES PRUNELLES goes up left to the table, facing the spectators.*]

CLAV. [*Stupefied.*] It's an attack of apoplexy!

DES PR. [*Striking his forehead with an inspired air and tearing the letter already commenced, writes another, standing.*] Something different: "My dear cousin, have the goodness to come and have a chat with me. [*He folds the letter and puts it in the*

already prepared envelope.] I have some very amicable propositions to make to you!"

CLAV. [*Staring at him in consternation.*] Eh! Just a shower-bath!

DES PR. [*Passing him the dispatch.*] Here, read this. [*Handing BASTIEN the letter.*] Bastien, give this to Monsieur Adhemar. Hurry! [*Exit BASTIEN.*]

CLAV. [*Who has read the telegram, seizing his hat.*] Passed! The divorce law! I'll run and tell my lawyer.

DES PR. And the whole town!

CLAV. The whole town! You know me! [*He goes out, running, at rear.*]

DES PR. [*Calmly, lighting a cigarette, and casting a look toward the door at left front.*] Now then, a cigarette—and let's play our hand cautiously!

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Same, different arrangement. The table in center stage is perpendicular, in its longest dimension, to the staircase. Close to the table, at left, the couch, almost facing the public. At left of the couch, the little work-table, and behind it a small chair. At right of the table, the arm-chair which was at left in the first act. Under the table, the tabaret. On the table, the Code, the bell and several pamphlets. The upholstered chair is in front of the window. The rest as in first act. The exterior curtain of the window is up. At rise of curtain JOSEPHA places CYPRIENNE'S cloak on the chair, and brushes her mistress's hat, standing at the threshold of the door at left front.*

JOS. [*To BASTIEN, who enters at rear, carrying newspapers on a plate.*] Well, are you here at last?

BAST. Yes, my angel!

JOS. Is the carriage ready?

BAST. What carriage?

JOS. The coupé that Madame is waiting for!

BAST. I have just come from an errand; I don't know anything about a carriage. I'll go and ask the footman, as soon as I have seen Monsieur.

JOS. Before! [*She goes out, left front.*]

BAST. There he is! [*DES PRUNELLES comes out of his study. BASTIEN behind the table.*] Monsieur, your papers are here. [*He places them on the table.*]

DES PR. Already?—Did you go to Monsieur Adhemar's?

BAST. I have just come from there, Monsieur,

DES PR. You saw him?

BAST. Yes, Monsieur. I no sooner rang the bell than he threw the door open and called out with joy: "At last! It's you!" I must say that after having seen who I was, he seemed so ashamed of having greeted me in such a friendly manner.

DES PR. You gave him my letter?

BAST. He read it twice, Monsieur!

DES PR. And did he give you any answer?

BAST. No, Monsieur, he only said to me [*Still very much troubled over the fact that he had talked so brotherly-like to me*]: "Tell Monsieur that I will certainly come; just tell him that!"

DES PR. That's all right, you may go now. [*He takes the papers.*]

JOS. [*Reappearing, to BASTIEN.*] Well! Madame is growing impatient, and where's that carriage?

BAST. I'll tend to it with all possible quickness.

DES PR. [*Tranquilly, coming down right.*] It's not necessary!—Tell Madame that the carriage is not ready.

JOS. Oh!

DES PR. I have told the coachman not to hitch up.

JOS. [*Stupefied.*] Ah! Monsieur has told—?

DES PR. The horses are sick.

JOS. Oh! The horses are—?

DES PR. Yes. [*To BASTIEN.*] Well, what are you waiting for? [*Exit BASTIEN, rear.*]

JOS. [*To herself, as she moves toward the right.*] Well, what do you think of that? There's going to be a pretty mix-up here in a minute!

DES PR. [*Taking up the envelope of a newspaper.*] Did you say something?

JOS. Nothing much, sir. I said: Ah! Those poor horses! [*She goes out L. I E.*]

DES PR. [*Alone.*] I certainly have struck it. He was waiting for her! This false news had no other purpose but to bring her to a decision. Ah! if my affliction is not so complete as I fear it is, you robber, won't I have some fun catching you in your own trap, by feigning to want a divorce! He calls her "dear one!" How affectionate has he the right to be to her? That is the question! [*He opens the paper and sits in the arm-chair right of the table.*]

CYPR. [*In the wings at left, exasperated.*] Oh! Is it my husband's orders?

JOS. [*Also in wings.*] Yes, madame.

DES PR. [*To himself.*] Quite so.

CYPR. [*Same play.*] Does Monsieur dare—? [*Breaking out in a strident laugh and approaching.*] Very well, we will laugh in his face!

DES PR. [*Feigning to read.*] Without doubt!

CYPR. [*Rushing suddenly out of her room and throwing her hat on a chair, in front of the couch.*] Oh! there you are, Monsieur. [*Turning the couch and the arm-chair around.*] So you have forbidden my coachman to hitch up my team?

DES PR. [*Tranquilly, folding his paper and rising.*] Yes, my darling.

CYPR. Under the pretext that my horses are sick?

DES PR. [*Same tone.*] Under that pretext.

CYPR. Monsieur!—

DES PR. [*Still calmly.*] Begging your pardon, dearest—First permit me. [*He places the paper on the table and crosses tranquilly in front of the dumb-founded CYPRIENNE to close the door at left front, which she has left open; returns to her, takes her hands and conducts her to the couch. CYPRIENNE, stupefied, hesitates to sit down. He insists gallantly.*] I entreat you. [*CYPRIENNE sits down mechanically, gazing at him with stupefaction.*] There! [*He seats himself by her side.*] See, this is the way we are to talk together henceforth, like two good friends!— [*He takes her by the hands, which she allows to wander without comprehending.*]—hand in hand—thanks to this little piece of paper. [*He has taken the telegram from his pocket and shows it to her, lifting his hand.*]

CYPR. [*Surprised.*] Ah!

DES PR. [*Gaily.*] Understand me?

CYPR. [*Giving a shout of joy.*] Divorce?

DES PR. Thrice-blest divorce!

CYPR. [*Confused.*] But just a few moments ago you said—

DES PR. A few moments ago, my dear little one, I did not dare to hope! But now, since the law has been passed—

CYPR. You will consent?

DES PR. With pleasure.

CYPR. [*Joyfully.*] And we will have a divorce?

DES PR. As soon as you desire!

CYPR. [*Embracing him wildly.*] Ah, how sweet you are—oh, how noble—how I love you! [*Loosing her embrace.*] Really now, are you in earnest? is it true? you are not trying to give me a false joy? we are really going to get a divorce? Will you swear it?

DES PR. Whoever retracts is a coward!

CYPR. Oh you dear boy! What happiness! But how shall we bring it to pass?

DES PR. Oh, as to the means, my dear, it is merely a question of choice. We'll talk of that directly. For the present, let us revel in the joy of this separation—so candid!

CYPR. So cordial!

DES PR. So tender!

CYPR. Ah! that's so true. I have never loved you so much. Oh, how I do love you! [*She takes his head in her two hands and kisses him.*]

DES PR. [*Kissing her in turn.*] Dear little girl! And it's so simple! We no longer find joy in each other's company, therefore we quit each other, as good friends; instead of living together, fighting like cats and dogs, fooling each other in a thousand little ways, and making untold misery for one another!

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Oh, yes, indeed. You certainly have caused me a heap of trouble, you rascal!

DES PR. [*Same play.*] And you have certainly fooled me in a thousand ways! Now, we can just laugh at all that, can't we? No more anger, laughter instead!

CYPR. [*Gaily.*] Yes, now it is only funny. Don't you think you have spied on me enough, you big tyrant? Go 'way! [*She pinches his chin.*]

DES PR. [*Pinches hers.*] Not quite.

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Oh! is that so? How about the electric bell?

DES PR. [*Same play.*] Say, it certainly was a clever dodge, eh, that little tinkler?

CYPR. But the funniest thing about it all is the fact that I heard you working at night!

DES PR. You don't say!

CYPR. [*Same play as above.*] I certainly did hear you. I said to myself: "What on earth can he be doing with the lock?"

DES PR. Yet I went at the matter very quietly.

CYPR. But I have a very acute hearing! And that noise gave me such a dreadful nightmare!

DES PR. Silly!

CYPR. I dreamed of daggers, poison—I saw you sharpening swords!

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha!

CYPR. [*Bursting out into a loud laugh.*] How stupid people sometimes are!

DES PR. Well, for my part, there was something that quite kept me from sleeping too!

CYPR. What was that?

DES PR. How the devil was it that Adhemar always knew when I went out?

CYPR. Go 'long, you big baby! [*Stopping short.*] You won't be angry?

DES PR. Why, no!

CYPR. Are you sure?

DES PR. Certainly—As things are now——

CYPR. All right, then.—A signal!

DES PR. Good! but what kind? how? where?

CYPR. Here.

DES PR. Here?

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Yes! look for it, look around——

DES PR. [*Pointing to the right.*] The window?

CYPR. Of course.

DES PR. A big piece of paper that you wrote on with charcoal?

[*He makes motions as if writing large letters.*]

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Oh, that would take too long!

DES PR. A candle, then? [*He makes the motion of raising and lowering.*]

CYPR. [*As above.*] Oh, you aren't going to find out, are you? I'd better tell you. The curtain!

DES PR. The curtain?

CYPR. [*Rises, trips to the window and undoes the cord that is used to regulate the curtain.*] Yes; look—this means, "He is here!" [*She brings it down half way.*] "He is going out!" [*Pulls it down the entire distance.*] "He has gone out!"

DES PR. [*Gaily.*] Ah, beautiful; but dangerous! Chance, or a servant——

CYPR. [*Coming back to the table.*] No, nobody touches it except Josepha and me!

DES PR. Oh! Josepha is in the game?

CYPR. Cer—tain—ly!

DES PR. Lovely girl! I suspected it!—Well, and then the handsome Adhemar—I say "handsome Adhemar" to please you, for between ourselves—that's the only criticism I have to make—Is Adhemar so deucedly bewitching?

CYPR. [*Behind the arm-chair, her two hands on the back.*] Ah! He's a darling fellow!

DES PR. Oh, without doubt; but morally, Jiminy Christmas, he's no saint——

CYPR. [*Coming down.*] What would I do with a saint?

DES PR. Well, that's so.

CYPR. [*Crossing behind the arm-chair.*] And besides, one hasn't a great deal of choice in these country towns; you've got to be satisfied with what you can get.—One becomes so lonesome!

DES PR. Well, to make a long story short—you're madly in love with him, I suppose?

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Oh! madly, no! One mustn't exaggerate.

DES PR. [*Rising and approaching her.*] And now tell me, please—since henceforth we have no secrets from each other——

CYPR. Why should we?

DES PR. [*Taking her hand.*] And, on the contrary, in the interests of our divorce, we ought to have a definite understanding on every point.

CYPR. Yes!

DES PR. Very well then—When you said to me, this morning: “Monsieur, I am a virtuous woman! I have never transgressed against my duty as a wife!”—good joke, eh?

CYPR. No! not a joke!

DES PR. Oh, come, my little kitten, we're going to tell each other everything; that's agreed now. You don't want to make me believe that you haven't made the faintest little pin-prick in the marriage contract?

CYPR. No! not one!

DES PR. Oh, tootsie, tootsie! come now.

CYPR. Why, never! I assure you, my dear.

DES PR. Not the tiniest little nickie, teeny, teeny?

CYPR. [*Sitting down in the arm-chair.*] Why, no; nothing, honor bright!

DES PR. During the entire three months that this has been going on?

CYPR. Four months!

DES PR. [*Seating himself on the tabaret in front of the table close to her.*] So much the more reason.—During four months, the only thing that you have together culled has been—daisies?

CYPR. Ah, you poor dear, if you only knew how people are under continual restraint! Everybody is spying on you; you are never left alone.

DES PR. True; but of course you have taken a few turns in a carriage with him?

CYPR. Oh, that! never!—And it isn't because he didn't ask me, either!

DES PR. And you never went to his apartments?

CYPR. No, never, upon my word of honor!—I was just about to go for the first time, after the telegram came. Well, anyway, I had given you warning.

DES PR. But you will admit, won't you, that you have had meetings with him outside of the house?

CYPR. Yes, a few, in various places!—on the speedway, in arcades, at the museum——

DES PR. And in all those places you have confined yourselves to conversation?

CYPR. Tender conversation——

DES PR. Nothing more serious? Not the least little kiss?

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] Oh, yes!

DES PR. Aha!

CYPR. But that isn't serious, surely—You were talking of serious things!

DES PR. Well then——?

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] But what do you care about all these little stories now?

DES. PR. They amuse me!

CYPR. [*Gaily moving the arm-chair down a little.*] Oh, very well, if that's the case, listen; here's the full list: The first kiss was four months ago—on the shoulder, at the Prefecture ball, while he was putting on my cloak!——

DES PR. One!

CYPR. The second, last summer.—[*She hesitates.*] But honest, now—won't you be angry?

DES PR. Do I look like it?

CYPR. The second, last summer, between two doors, on the arm! he even bit me!

DES PR. Two!

CYPR. And the third, eight days ago, on the neck, when we were looking at the little goldfishes!

DES PR. And the next?

CYPR. That's all!

DES PR. Cyprienne!——

CYPR. Why, if there was anything else, I would tell you—now.

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Nevertheless I'd be very much interested in seeing——

CYPR. [*Same play.*] What?

DES PR. Your correspondence.

CYPR. His letters? Do you want to, dear? They are here.

DES PR. Here? Why, I've looked everywhere! [*He turns towards the left and places his hand mechanically on the table, pointing to the dining-room door.*]

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

DES PR. You laugh?

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] You have your hand on them——

DES PR. [*Opening the drawer of the work-table.*] In here?—Oh, this is a secret?

CYPR. [*Running to the table and pushing a button,*

a secret drawer opens toward the audience, on the narrow side of the table.] There!

CYPR. [*Taking a packet of letters from the drawer.*] And all arranged according to dates!—

DES PR. [*Very anxiously.*] Where's the last one?

CYPR. [*Taking a letter from the packet and keeping the drawer on her knee.*] Here!—See, I have dated it in pencil: “November 16, 1880.”

DES PR. [*Taking the letter excitedly.*] Yesterday! That certainly is the one! [*Reading.*] “Dear heart, 'tis now one hundred twenty-two days since I first confessed my love to you—” It's in verse!

CYPR. Think so?

DES PR. [*Continues reading.*] “And I am now no further advanced than at the commencement! [*Makes a gesture signifying satisfaction.*] Oh Cyprienne! Have pity on my suffering!”

CYPR. Poor fellow!

DES PR. [*Wiping his brow and handing her back the letter.*] Woof!

CYPR. [*Placing the letter back in the packet and the packet in the drawer.*] Now you see that I haven't deceived you!

DES PR. Yes! Well, honestly, in spite of the divorce, I like it better so! [*Rummaging in the drawer.*] And all these knickknacks are—what?

CYPR. Souvenirs!

DES PR. Flowers, ribbons—a match? [*He takes it.*]

CYPR. [*Taking it out of his hands.*] Oh! that? It's in memory of a beautiful fright that you gave us two weeks ago.

DES PR. How was that?

CYPR. One evening you came in suddenly. I was here—think of it!—with Adhemar. I heard

you open the door ; I had only time enough to put out the lamp, and there we were in the darkness, silent and terrified. You came in, swearing at the servants, and went to the chimney on tiptoe. You found a box of matches, you struck one—crack ! It blazed—and went out ! another—scratch ! that one blazed and went out—a third—scratch !—and that one didn't burn at all ! You went out cursing ; Adhemar stole away and I picked up this match, and have kept it, in thankfulness to the administration ! [*She throws the match back into the drawer.*]

DES PR. [*Gaily.*] Supposing I doubted that story ? [*Rummaging in the drawer and finding a button.*] A button ?

CYPR. [*Quickly, placing the drawer on the table.*] Overcoat button ! Say, really, this is funny ! Don't you recognize it ? [*She lifts DES PRUNELLES' arm so as to place the button close to his eyes.*]

DES PR. No.

CYPR. You picked it up from the carpet one day and gave it to Josepha, saying to her : “ Look, here's a button to sew on my overcoat.” [*Laughing.*] It was Adhemar's !

DES PR. [*Laughing a trifle weakly.*] Ha, ha ! Very funny, indeed.

[*Putting the button back in the drawer.*]

CYPR. Frankly, now, you can't call that infidelity, can you ?

DES PR. [*Gaily.*] Thank heaven ! I am still intact !—But, by the holy jumping jiminy, I certainly escaped by the hair of my teeth !

CYPR. [*Kissing him and laughing.*] Ha, ha, that's true, isn't it, goodness knows ?

BAST. [*Announcing.*] Monsieur de Gratignan !
[ADHEMAR and BASTIEN stand stupefied by the sight

of CYPRIENNE in the arms of DES PRUNELLES.—
BASTIEN goes out immediately.]

CYPR. [*Astounded.*] Adhemar?

DES PR. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Yes, I wrote to him and begged him to come.

ADHE. [*Astounded, to himself as he comes down left.*] Was it to have me see this?—

DES PR. [*Gaily.*] Come right in, young man, you are not out of place here.

ADHE. Ah! [*CYPRIENNE rises quickly.*]

DES PR. [*Same tone approaching ADHEMAR gaily.*] And so, my young friend, there is no way to conquer that love of yours? It is a wild passion, a delirium?

ADHE. Monsieur!—

DES PR. Cyprienne has told me all! [*Showing him the drawer.*] The matches, the button, the kisses on the neck, the shoulder, the arm—Bless my soul, you're a clever wooer, you young devil!—It seems you bite, eh?

ADHE. [*Looking at CYPRIENNE, who smiles.*] You know that?

DES PR. [*Smiling familiarly.*] Well—to put the whole matter in a nutshell—You've got to have my wife, no use talking, eh? You positively must have her?

ADHE. [*Still astonished.*] But—

DES PR. Very well, my dear boy, take her. [*Going toward CYPRIENNE.*] Take her! I hereby cede her to you!

ADHE. [*More confused than ever, at left.*] Oh!

DES PR. Now will you say I'm not a good fellow?

CYPR. [*Gaily.*] He doesn't understand!

DES PR. [*To ADHEMAR.*] The divorce law!

CYPR. [*Idem.*] We are going to have a divorce!

DES PR. And you will marry each other—I'll marry you!

ADHE. The divorce law?—

CYPR. Since it has been passed—

ADHE. [*Forgetting himself.*] Oh, bosh!

CYPR. [*Surprised.*] Well!—And your telegram?

DES PR. Ah! I understand; in spite of that telegram he still had doubts, eh?—you had doubts?

ADHE. God!—

DES PR. Very natural: I also. I sought later bulletins, I went to police headquarters. Authentic, official. Nothing could be more certain!

ADHE. Passed?

CYPR. Why, without a doubt.

ADHE. [*To himself.*] Ah! what a strange coincidence!

DES PR. So I said to myself: Let's get to work at once; and after a very cordial explanation with this dear child here, we have come to an agreement. It is settled, concluded; we have been mis-mated; I pass her over to you.

ADHE. [*A little nervous, advancing toward him.*] Ah, Monsieur, my hopes did not go so far!

DES PR. You're a lucky dog, my dear boy; hm! a pretty woman who will bring you four hundred thousand francs in her own name!

ADHE. [*Radiant.*] Four hundred thousand!

DES PR. Four hundred thousand!—A marriage for love which happens to be a good catch for you as well—for you haven't a sou! Say! I fancy you're not to be pitied!

ADHE. [*Beaming with joy.*] Oh, no!—Ah! Monsieur! [*Aside.*] Why, this suits me to a T! [*He goes and places his hat on the mantelpiece and returns to DES PRUNELLES.*] Oh! Monsieur! Oh! my benefactor! [*He holds out his hand to DES*

PRUNELLES. DES PRUNELLES *takes it as well as that of CYPRIENNE and, with a gesture, bids them do likewise. The three have hold of each other's hands, forming a circle.*]

DES PR. Yes, my dear friend, yes!—And now, my friends, a truce to compliments, and let us be practical. [*To ADHEMAR.*] Sit down. Let us talk of our divorce, and carefully consider the ways and means. [*He seats himself on the couch and CYPRIENNE on the tabaret at right of the table. ADHEMAR takes a chair behind the couch and sits at left, before the small table.*]

ADHE. [*Seated.*] That's the idea!

CYPR. [*Leaning upon the end of the table.*] Yes.

DES PR. I understand the divorce law somewhat. Cyprienne is conversant with it.

CYPR. In every detail!

DES PR. So we don't need any outside help. The new law is nothing more than Part VI of the Civil Code, slightly modified. It offers us various modes of procedure—The first and most simple is: divorce by mutual consent. That's our case exactly.—And we have fulfilled the required conditions—two years of married life.

CYPR. But—the proceedings take too long!

ADHE. Too long!

CYPR. [*Quickly.*] Oh! there's the petition for a divorce, renewed every three months, each time with authorization of parents not deceased, calling of four witnesses aged fifty years or more, presentation before the president of the divorce tribunal, filing of documents and briefs, petition for entry of case, paternal speech of the magistrate, friendly observations of witnesses, quarrel of husband or wife, for which see documents; new lawsuit, order referring the case to a judge sitting in chambers,

opinion of the magistracy, verification, declaration of admission, order to appear before the mayor, and, finally, decree of divorce!—Too tedious!—It would drive one crazy!

ADHE. And these formalities take up——?

DES PR. [*Who has taken the copy of the Code on the table and opened it.*] Phew! ten months!

ADHE. [*With a start.*] Ten months?

DES PR. If no hindrance develops.

CYPR. And even that isn't all!

ADHE. Eh?

CYPR. Because—Article 297. [*To DES PRUNELLES, who is looking through the Code.*] At the bottom of the page. "In case of divorce by mutual consent, neither of the parties may contract a new marriage until three years after the granting of the decree of divorce."

ADHE. Three years!

DES PR. [*Handing him the Code.*] Total four years.

CYPR. Hm, well! You see me waiting four years, with my arms crossed, between a husband who no longer is one, and another who is not yet one!—you see me!

DES PR. No!

CYPR. No! Never in the world!

DES PR. Impracticable! We shall have to fall back upon the divorce for stated cause.

ADHE. [*Who has been consulting the Code, placing his finger suddenly on the section.*] Adultery!—you catch us both in flagrante delicto?

CYPR. In that case it's quite another matter; we couldn't marry at all.

ADHE. [*Scared.*] Eh?

CYPR. Article 298.—[*To ADHEMAR, who is looking through the Code.*] Top of the page! Further

over! further over! "If divorce is decreed on account of adultery, the culpable person cannot marry his or her accomplice!"

ADHE. [*Reading the clause.*] Never!

CYPR. For fear that they may redeem their fault!

DES PR. Anyway, here's the point! I would be getting a divorce on account of being a wronged husband, and I should have to allow myself to be deceived in order to get it? That would be too idiotic!

ADHE. }
CYPR. } That's so.

DES PR. Something else——

CYPR. There isn't a great deal of room for choice. We could not base our suit on insanity on the part of either party, or abandonment, or a penitentiary sentence, or moral excesses.

ADHE. [*Same play as before, with his finger on a section.*] One moment!—Suppose we base it on a certain—a—failure to support on the part of Monsieur?

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] Oh, heavens, no! it isn't that bad!

DES PR. [*Pressing her hand.*] Thanks!

CYPR. There's nothing left now but cruelty and assault.

ADHE. Blows?

DES PR. What, nothing left but that? We shall be forced to box each other on the ear!

CYPR. And what's more, only those that I get will count!

DES PR. Quite so.

CYPR. And before witnesses, in public—how perfectly lovely!

DES PR. Oh, that can be arranged very prettily. We can invite a party of friends to dine with us.

We will dispute during the entire meal, and when the dessert comes on——

CYPR. Oh, don't ! that's revolting !

DES PR. Say—there's plenty of women who aren't averse to that sort of thing !

CYPR. [*Rising.*] Oh, well—that's in the heat of passion.

[ADHEMAR *also rises and goes to place the chair at left, close to the door.*]

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Well then, mutual consent, four years.

CYPR. [*Objecting strongly.*] No !

DES PR. 'Then—the slap in the face !

ADHE. [*Approaching CYPRIENNE.*] Ah, dearest one, for my sake, I entreat you !—accept !

DES PR. Yes, why not, a little slap !—so little, so tiny, teeny-weeny !

CYPR. There's no other way !—I must !

DES PR. All right ; that goes, then ?

CYPR. It goes !

DES PR. Bravo ! By that method, at any rate, you'll have only ten months to wait.

CYPR. And as things look now that's a pretty fair prospect.

DES PR. [*Passing between them.*] And right here, my dear children, permit me to make a few carefully weighed observations. My willingness to oblige is unbounded, you will admit, and you certainly would not want to recompense with ingratitude a generosity of which there are, I dare say, few examples.

ADHE. Ah ! Monsieur !

CYPR. Ah ! my dear, dear friend !

DES PR. Very well then, I conjure you, since

you have but a ten-months' wait, impose silence on your hearts. Until our divorce is pronounced, I beseech you, my children, respect my honor, as well, and in fact a little better than you have done thus far! And, in pursuance of this plan, if I were in your place, I would suppress kissing as dangerous and exciting. If you abuse this privilege now, what will you do later with your evenings? I will add for your special ear, young man, for it is to you especially that I address myself, that your personal interest, if personal interest has any weight with a soul so deeply in love,—that your best interests bid you act with the greatest possible restraint toward Madame. It is an unexpected stroke of good fortune for you, to marry twenty thousand francs a year, when one considers your salary of twenty-six hundred francs. Don't do anything that might spoil so charming a state of affairs. Ten months—it's a long time. Who can guarantee you that your passion will not be sated? and that at the moment of your marriage one of you may not cry out, "No, by gracious! I've had enough of it! I don't want any more!"

ADHE. Oh!

DES PR. Ah! the uncharted rock of your situation is satiety. Don't spoil your supper by taking an afternoon lunch!

ADHE. No, Monsieur, no.

DES PR. [*To ADHEMAR, with an air of camaraderie.*] Say, do you know what I would do, if I were in your shoes? I'll tell you. I would accept that place at Arcachon at once, and I would leave this evening; and for some time to come I would stay away from here.

ADHE. Ah! Monsieur!

DES PR. Well—it would be the part of wisdom!

[ADHEMAR and CYPRIENNE regard each other pit-
eously.] So, consider, weigh matters, it's the
counsel of a friend that I'm giving you. And I
hope it won't be the last one, either. [*With emo-
tion, putting CYPRIENNE'S arm in his.*] When you
are married, my dear friends, you will permit me,
won't you, to come and see you now and then?
You will reserve a little place for me between you,
at your fireside?—at your table—Sundays?

CYPR. [*Touched.*] Ah, yes, my dear friend!

ADHE. [*Same play.*] Ah, yes!

DES PR. Hey? Good Lord, I could be useful
to you occasionally! The advice I could give you,
through my experience! [*Tapping CYPRIENNE'S
hand.*] My profound comprehension of her char-
acter! And then your household affairs—I will
guide you in the choice of your little economies—
if you think of making any. With an income of
twenty-two thousand six hundred francs one can't
do very much—[*This observation causes a start on
the part of CYPRIENNE.*]—especially when a person
is accustomed, like her, to eat up sixty thousand.
[*CYPRIENNE is again struck with the force of the
idea.*] But of course, with care, and with great econ-
omy in table expenses, choice of apartments, dress,
and horses especially—a great many sacrifices! For
while it is a stroke of fortune for you, my friend, for
her it will mean a sacrifice! But making a sacrifice
for the man a woman loves—that is the greatest hap-
piness in the world! [*Taking ADHEMAR'S arm with-
out letting go of CYPRIENNE'S.*] And I will be able
to say, as I look at you:—"They are happy! And
it is I that have made them so!--This, this is my
work!" And that is a tender thought; it is a sweet
thought, I assure you!—Positively, I am getting
foolish! the thought touches me! [*To CYPRIENNE,*

taking her in his arms.] My dear, dear child. [*To ADHEMAR.*] You will permit me?

ADHE. Oh, I entreat you; go ahead.

DES PR. [*Kissing CYPRIENNE upon the forehead.*] One cannot have lived so long a time in the greatest possible intimacy with another, without there being a certain grief. [*To CYPRIENNE arranging a curl upon her forehead.*] You will think of me sometimes, won't you, Madame?

CYPR. [*Touched.*] Aren't you going to call me "dear" any more?

DES PR. Well—all right, I will. [*To ADHEMAR.*] You will permit me? [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Yes, you will think of me, dear. [*He kisses her, and turning toward ADHEMAR says:*] Thanks. [*Leading CYPRIENNE over toward ADHEMAR.*] And now, my children, it is right that you be left alone! You will have supper here, won't you, my dear successor?

ADHE. Oh! Monsieur!

DES PR. [*Going up right.*] Do, I beg of you. Have supper here—before your departure!—Take supper here. You will be doing me a favor! [*He holds out his hand to ADHEMAR.*]

ADHE. [*Passing behind the table to go to him.*] Ah, Monsieur, how can I show my gratitude to you?

DES PR. [*Grasping his hand and with emotion.*] By making her happy!—I'll leave you for a few moments, my dear children!—for a few moments! [*He opens the door of his study, turns round to give ADHEMAR a final handshake and goes out quickly. ADHEMAR with a gaze of admiration watches him goes out.*]

CYPR. [*Aside at left in front of the table.*] Twenty thousand francs instead of sixty,—that isn't so lovely either.

ADHE. [*Quite overjoyed, coming down quickly to CYPRIENNE.*] Ah! Cyprienne! Won't we be happy, though?

CYPR. Yes, my dear, yes.—You especially!

ADHE. [*Walks back and forth, and reaching the extreme right, says with enthusiasm.*] Ah! loving one another openly, without secrets, without plots, without danger!

CYPR. So that bothered you? That's odd; for my part it was exactly those things that gave the affair charm for me.

ADHE. [*Quickly, going up a little and pointing to DES PRUNELLES' study door.*] Same here—but I felt considerable remorse at the thought of deceiving that noble-hearted gentleman. But now—all is security, calm!

CYPR. A great calm, my dear friend—ah, what a calm!

ADHE. [*Coming down toward CYPRIENNE, without looking at her.*] We are strong enough to make the sacrifices that he imposes on us, aren't we, my Cyprienne?

CYPR. Yes, my dear, yes.

ADHE. [*As before.*] And strong enough to avoid betraying such great confidence?

CYPR. Quite so, my dear friend, quite so!

ADHE. [*Turning toward the door of DES PRUNELLES' apartment.*] That man! What generosity! What a heart! what a soul!

CYPR. [*Quietly.*] Yes, yes, my dear friend!—It is I who am a beast!

ADHE. [*Running to CYPRIENNE.*] Ah!

CYPR. Good gracious, if he has all the virtues, I am doing wrong, you'll have to admit, to cast him aside for the sake of my lover.

ADHE. [*Hastily.*] Don't use that word any

more, Cyprienne. Your lover exists no more: I am no longer your lover——

CYPR. No; at present you are my husband!

ADHE. To be! Your husband in waiting, who now sees in you only a fiancée, and, as such, honors you and respects you!

CYPR. Very true, my dear, you respect me—he respects me—I am a much-respected woman.

ADHE. [*Following up his idea, with transport.*] Ten months—after all, what's that?

CYPR. It is lost time!

ADHE. [*Without listening to her.*] Ah! I shall willingly wait!

CYPR. Thanks.—

ADHE. [*Still without hearing her.*] And I will depart to-morrow, as he desires, to show how far my respect for him goes.

CYPR. [*With ironical calm.*] Oh, say it again, my dear, so that I can be sure——

ADHE. [*Surprised at her tone.*] Are you feeling a little nervous, Cyprienne?

CYPR. Do you think so?

ADHE. Yes, this display of feeling—this abrupt change! [*Passing over behind the table and the couch to get his hat on the mantelpiece.*] Calm yourself, soul of my life! I am going to hurry to my sister's; she expects me at dinner; I will excuse myself and come back.

CYPR. Do so, my dear, and take care that you don't catch cold on the way.

ADHE. [*Behind the couch.*] Oh, I've brought my overcoat.

CYPR. Oh! then——

ADHE. And what will we do after dinner?

CYPR. [*Ironically.*] We'll have a game of bridge whist.

ADHE. [*Delightedly.*] As you say !

CYPR. O happiness.

ADHE. I'll hurry back. My soul, my life, my treasure ! [*Going out, apart.*] Four hundred thousand francs !—treasure, that's the right word ! [*Exit.*]

CYPR. [*Alone, after a second of reflection.*] Well—really—now that it's no longer forbidden—isn't the same savor at all !

[*MADAME DE BRIONNE runs in and approaches CYPRIENNE, crossing behind the table. MADAME DE VALFONTAINE follows her. CLAVIGNAC, who brought them, comes down left.*]

MME DE B. [*Briskly, gaily.*] Ah ! my dear, so it is true ?

MME DE V. Has it really happened ?

CYPR. What ?

MME DE B. }
MME DE V. } The divorce law.

CYPR. Passed ? Oh, yes.

MME DE B. I win, I win !

CLAV. [*To MADAME DE VALFONTAINE.*] You see now——

CYPR. What is it about ?

CLAV. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] I met these ladies on the boulevard. Madame de Valfontaine wouldn't believe the news was true.

MME DE B. We made a bet !

MME DE V. And I don't believe yet that I have lost !

CYPR. Oh, goodness——

CLAV. Where's the telegram ?

MME DE B. Have you it, dear ?

CYPR. No, Monsieur Des Prunelles has it.—
Wait a minute. [*MADAME DE VALFONTAINE has*

seated herself on the couch, MADAME DE BRIONNE is standing at her left, and CLAVIGNAC at the extreme left. CYPRIENNE goes and raps on the door at rear.]
Henri!

DES PR. [*Opening the door slightly, says tenderly.*] What is it, darling?

CYPR. [*Affectionately.*] Don't disturb yourself, my dear; just one word.

DES PR. I'll be with you, dearest, I'll be with you right off! in a second!

MME DE V. [*To MADAME DE BRIONNE, whispering.*] Oh, gracious, but aren't they sweet to each other?

CLAV. There you are.—The very hope of divorce——

[*DES PRUNELLES comes out of his study in a dress suit and white tie.*]

DES PR. [*Taking CYPRIENNE's hand affectionately in both his hands and coming down with her.*] Well, what is it, darling? [*Perceiving the ladies, gallantly and gaily.*] Ah! Ladies, beg pardon!

MME DE V. It's we again.

DES PR. [*Gallant, amiable, quite different from his manner in the first act.*] Never too often! [*He shakes hands with MADAME DE BRIONNE across the couch.*]

CYPR. These ladies, my dear, would very much like to look at the famous telegram.

DES PR. [*Coming down.*] Why, certainly, I have it with me right along now. [*He takes it out of his wallet and hands it to MADAME DE VALFONTAINE.*] Here you are! •

MME DE V. [*Reading.*] Passed!—Enormous majority.

MME DE B. [*To MADAME DE VALFONTAINE.*] Aha! you've lost, dearie; that settles it!

MME DE V. [*Spitefully.*] Settles it? Not yet. How about the Senate.

ALL. [*Laughing.*] Oh!

MME DE B. If that's the only obstacle——

CYPR. Well! What astonishes me is the fact that the wife is vexed at the result—and the widow rejoices!

MME DE V. It was so satisfactory as it was—Monsieur on his side of the fence, and Madame on hers. What need of a divorce?

CYPR. [*To MADAME DE BRIONNE.*] That explains one case.—But you, Estelle; you are radiant with joy!

MME DE B. Well, that's partly because I have won my bet. And then—it used to be my idea to marry a widower, because he would have expended all his ill-humor on his late partner. But a divorced man is better still. The first wife exasperated him so much that he will be sure to find the second charming!

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha! very funny!—very, very funny! [*He kisses her hand. CYPRIENNE looks at him with astonishment.*]

MME DE B. [*Taking the telegram and passing in front of MADAME DE VALFONTAINE and DES PRU- NELLES.*] Will you excuse me, Monsieur? And you, dear?

CYPR. What are you going to do?

MME DE B. About a score of women followed us to your door to find out if there really was such a telegram. They didn't have the courage to come in. But they are outside, in front of the iron gate, and I have promised to show it to them from a distance.

DES PR. [*Opening the door at the right.*] Exhibit it, Madame, exhibit it! Let us not be selfish!

MME DE B. [*Unfolding the telegram.*] You will see the effect that this little flag will have. [*She waves the telegram in the air near the window.*]

CRIES. [*Without.*] Hurrah! Hurrah!

MME DE B. [*Turning round.*] All married!

CLAV. There's going to be fireworks!

MME DE B. They won't be completely happy until they have laid their hands on it. [*To DES PRUNELLES.*] Would you allow us to make a copy of it?

DES PR. Most assuredly!

[*MADAME DE BRIONNE goes out through the garden door. MADAME DE VALFONTAINE and CYPRIENNE stand at the threshold to watch.*]

DES PR. [*Aside to CLAVIGNAC, dragging him toward the proscenium.*] Thanks, old boy!

CLAV. [*Same tone.*] What for?

DES PR. [*Same play.*] For the rapid dissemination that you have given this false report!

[*A murmur, with cries of satisfaction, is heard without.*]

CLAV. [*As before.*] What! That telegram?

DES PR. False as a counterfeit coin! It was gotten up by Mr. Adhemar.

CLAV. [*Loth to believe.*] Ah!

DES PR. Hush, man!

CLAV. What, you old scoundrel, and you went and caused me this false joy, by pretending to believe in it yourself?

DES PR. It was part of my game!

CLAV. And why didn't you take me into your confidence?

DES PR. Would you have retailed the report with such great assiduity if I had?

CLAV. Say! You deserve——But what good will this do you?

DES PR. It will bring me back my wife, without the shadow of a doubt.

CLAV. Aw, bosh!—What would Adhemar be doing?

DES PR. Oh, not so fast. I have spiked Monsieur Adhemar's guns. And I'm going to put a dunce-cap on both their heads.

CLAV. What?

DES PR. I will get a divorce! And I will marry them to one another!

CLAV. Well——

DES PR. Lord——!

CLAV. And then——?

DES PR. Why, then, then, you great booby, don't you see that the husband will be Adhemar?

CLAV. And the lover will be—you!

DES PR. [*Noticing that the women are coming back into the room.*] Sh!

MME DE B. *Coming back with CYPRIENNE and MADAME DE VALFONTAINE.*] Radiant! they are radiant! Here, dear Monsieur—your talisman. [*She hands him back the telegram.*]

DES PR. [*Kissing her hand.*] May it bring you joy!

MME DE B. [*Gaily.*] I accept that wish as a prophecy! [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Good day, dearie! [*Exit, rear.*]

CYPR. Until to-morrow! [*Escorting MME DE VALFONTAINE up stage.*] Come, my dear, brighten up!

MME DE V. Never again! They have murdered gallantry! [MMES. DE VALFONTAINE and DE BRIONNE go out accompanied by CYPRIENNE.]

CLAV. [*Aside to DES PRUNELLES.*] Well then—you can dine with me now?

DES PR. No; but perhaps I'll dine near you!

CLAV. What?

DES PR. [*Seeing his wife coming back.*] Hush! Out with you, and mum's the word!

CLAV. [*To CYPRIENNE bowing.*] Madame——
[CYPRIENNE bows to him without speaking. He goes out. Meanwhile BASTIEN has entered by the door at rear right, has placed DES PRUNELLES' overcoat and hat on the pouf, and goes out.]

DES PR. [*Going to take his hat and coat, while CYPRIENNE comes down, right.*] And now, my dear child, I also will bid you good evening.

CYPR. [*Shocked.*] What, good evening? Aren't you going to dine at home, dear?

DES PR. Oh, no!

CYPR. But you invited Adhemar to supper!

DES PR. With you—not with me!

CYPR. Ah! I understood—It was such a pretty idea, a sort of betrothal dinner, just for us three!

DES PR. [*Making another step to get his hat and coat.*] No, my pretty baby. You will like it better dining alone—just you two. My presence would put a damper on the young man's pleasure.

CYPR. [*Still at left.*] Why, on the contrary, you would inject some life into him. Now that he is to marry me, he is congealed—he's a cake of ice.

DES PR. [*Coming back toward her, behind the couch.*] And besides, to speak sincerely, I'm glad to have the opportunity to go out and take the air, and to stretch my arms a little on being released from my prison.

CYPR. Now—my whole evening is spoilt! Oh, please stay!

DES PR. [*Starting to go.*] Honestly, I can't, duckie. Well—good evening! [*He holds out his hand to her across the table.*]

CYPR. [*Approaching the table and holding on to his hand.*] But where are you going to eat?

DES PR. [*With the air of one who wants to get away.*] At Dagneau's, the *Grand Vatel*.

CYPR. [*Still holding his hand.*] Alone?

DES PR. Probably. [*He takes his hand away.*]

CYPR. Oh! you aren't sure?

DES PR. Well——!

CYPR. Is someone expecting you?

DES PR. No—but I may find some friend.

CYPR. A woman?

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] Oh!

CYPR. Now confess that you're going to dine with some woman.

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] I assure you I am not, dear.

CYPR. Henri, don't lie.

DES PR. [*Laughing again.*] But I'm not lying!

CYPR. You are not frank and open. That isn't loyalty. I told you everything. Now you tell me everything. Who is she? Please tell me who she is.

DES PR. [*Same play.*] Well, since I don't know her myself.

CYPR. [*Approaching him and rumpling his neck-tie slightly.*] Do you mean to say that you've gone and dressed yourself up like that to dine alone?

DES PR. Certainly!

CYPR. You never made yourself so handsome for me?

DES PR. Well, upon my word——!

CYPR. [*Half angry and seeking to wheedle him.*]

Anyway, as things are now, this is very funny—these mysterious goings on—why? [*Taking his arm in a friendly way.*] What difference would it make to me now? We're only good friends; that's all—isn't it? Two comrades—two jolly boys?

DES PR. Surely.

CYPR. All right, then——?

DES PR. All right, then—what difference does it make to you?

CYPR. Why, I just want to know! It vexes me not to know.

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] But I repeat there is nobody.

CYPR. [*Letting go of his arm.*] You don't seem to be able to say it without laughing.

DES PR. I laugh—because it's too funny, this access of posthumous jealousy.

CYPR. But it isn't jealousy; it's curiosity. And that's entirely natural, surely. All women——

DES PR. Well, anyway, I can't tell you, my dear.

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] Ah, you can't! There you are!

DES PR. Because——

CYPR. Because you're afraid it will compromise her?

DES PR. No, because——

CYPR. [*Without listening.*] Do I know her?

DES PR. No more than I.

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] But as much! Is it one of my acquaintances?

DES PR. Dear, if you——

CYPR. I'll wager it's one of my friends!

DES PR. Oh!

CYPR. Oh, that's the way it always is! I'll bet that if I investigate——[*Suddenly.*] Madame de Brionne!

DES PR. Estelle ?

CYPR. Estelle !—That's it ; you've given yourself away !

DES PR. No, I haven't.

CYPR. Oh ! “ Estelle ! ” Come now, doesn't that make it plain ?

DES PR. But I call her “ Estelle ” just as you do, my dear.

CYPR. [*Moving a little way off from him.*] Oh, yes, like me, nothing ! I say “ Estelle,” short, like that. But you—“ Est—e—elle ! ” You bleat her name ! I'll wager my best hat there's something in it !

DES PR. But—

CYPR. Oh ! anyway, I've had my suspicions about it, don't you ever think——

DES PR. Aha !

CYPR. She was always snooping around in my house and I never could endure her, the affected thing, with her giddy airs ! An intriguing creature, jealous, envious, deceitful !

DES PR. Oh !——

CYPR. [*Leaning against the table.*] Oh, naturally you defend her—and she's made up from head to foot ! Hair, eyebrows, eyelashes—none of it is her own. Painted, enameled, varnished ! She has a smile—goodness, I wonder what she made that with !

DES PR. Oh !

CYPR. [*Moving away from the table slightly.*] Besides, she gave herself away just now, when she told us that she wanted the divorce law to pass, so that she could have another woman's husband ! And only a few minutes ago, here, right under my nose, she was all lighted up with smiles—She actually danced for joy ! You kissed her hands—I call that indecent !

DES PR. If you'd only let me——

CYPR. Well, so that's your conquest! Really, I can't compliment you on it!

DES PR. Come now, lovey, that's not very good taste on your part. I didn't rip your Adhemar up the back.

CYPR. [*Going up left.*] Oh, go ahead and do it!—"Estelle!"—I can see through a glass window!—"Estelle!"—I believe you're foolish enough to marry her!

DES PR. I'd like to call your attention——

CYPR. [*With both hands on the back cushion of the couch.*] Are you going to marry her?

DES PR. I haven't said so.

CYPR. But you will! [*With an exclamation of horror.*] Oh!—And you would marry that little devil, who deceived her first husband, who will deceive you as she did him, and who will deceive the third, when you are gone, poisoned to death by her chemical products! [*As she speaks she gradually gets over to the right, behind the table.*]

DES PR. You carry things pretty far! [*He sits down on the couch, putting on his gloves.*]

CYPR. [*Coming down to the front of the stage, right.*] And so that rouge-pot will take my place here! She will install herself in my house—[*Goes up and strikes the arm-chair.*—among my furniture! She will bespatter me with mud from my own carriages! [*Going toward DES PRUNELLES, in front of the table.*] Why, if I knew it was going to be that way—rather than let you do it—I wouldn't accept the divorce!

DES PR. And how about Adhemar?

CYPR. [*Sinking into the arm-chair at right of the table.*] Oh, Adhemar!—To think that I am to be

cast aside for that wax doll! Oh, heavens! No, no! really, that's too much!

DES PR. [*Standing.*] I am not casting you aside. We're casting each other aside.

CYPR. [*Rising and coming down.*] If it were someone else, I wouldn't care.—But that woman—Oh!

DES PR. [*Behind her.*] All right, be happy, then—it isn't she!

CYPR. [*Turning suddenly round toward him and seizing the lapel of his coat to look at him face to face.*] Then it's some other woman?

DES PR. I——

CYPR. Who?

DES PR. Since you don't care——

CYPR. I don't care! No, I don't care! But please tell me who?

DES PR. Why?

CYPR. Is she young? Pretty?

DES PR. Since——

CYPR. Prettier than I?

DES PR. But what does it signify to you?

CYPR. [*Resolutely and with comic approach to a cry.*] It—bothers me!

DES PR. Bosh!

CYPR. Yes, it bothers me, so there—to think that you would go off like that, right away, and run around with some other woman. It's silly, of course I know—but it's too much for me; it worries me!

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] Still——

CYPR. And besides, you are too merry, you have too happy an air. I have never seen you so joyous.

DES PR. [*Taking her hands as if to say good-by. Both in the arm-chair.*] But there is an excellent reason for that, you silly little kitten. My independence, your serenity of mind, our mutual hap-

piness! I am happy to see you happy, dear—for of course you are happy, aren't you?

CYPR. [*Kneeling on the arm-chair, without certainty.*] Yes.

DES PR. Well then——?

CYPR. [*Ready to cry.*] But there's a big fly in my soup!

DES PR. How's that?

CYPR. [*Sinking into his arms across the arm-chair and bursting into tears.*] You aren't sorry enough about leaving me!

DES PR. Ah!

CYPR. [*Still crying.*] No, you aren't a bit kind! You throw me into a corner like an old bouquet. So there, so there! It's humiliating, I won't be thrown away like that!

DES PR. [*Straining her to his heart and patting her on the back.*] Well, then am I to understand that you do not want to be separated from me?

CYPR. [*As before.*] No, but that doesn't prevent me from having certain regrets—I have some regrets, I have; but you, not one! Yet we have had some good times together——

DES PR. [*As before.*] Occasionally.

CYPR. [*As before.*] Oh, often! It's evident you have forgotten them. I am the only one who remembers!

DES PR. [*As before, kissing the hair that hangs over her forehead.*] My big baby girl!

CYPR. [*As before.*] Eat dinner with me just once more. People eat at home on holidays and family festivals. This is a festival. To-morrow you can have supper with the other woman.

DES PR. [*As before.*] But there isn't any other woman!

CYPR. [*As before.*] Oh!

DES PR. [*As before.*] Do you want to have it proved to you?

CYPR. [*As before.*] What?

DES PR. [*As before.*] Come and eat supper with me.

CYPR. [*With joy, raising her head.*] At the café?

DES PR. Together!

CYPR. No one else?

DES PR. Like a couple of jolly bachelors!

CYPR. A farewell dinner!

DES PR. A divorce dinner! Ah, that's such a pretty idea!

CYPR. Ah! yes!

DES PR. I will have a nice little meal prepared for you!

CYPR. And will you make me a little tipsy?

DES PR. If you wish.

CYPR. [*Laughing and dancing with joy as she goes to the right to take her hat and cloak.*] Oh, isn't it jolly? What a clever idea! And besides, it was made up on the spirit of the moment! And so original, so new!

DES PR. Isn't it?

CYPR. [*Putting on her hat, which is on a chair behind the couch, and taking her cloak.*] Oh! how the thought amuses me! Couldn't be anything nicer! It's just too lovely for anything! Oh, I've got to kiss you, you dear. [*She kisses DES PRU- NELLES, who has gone up stage, and comes down right.*] And, besides, this way, I can be sure that you won't eat supper with that other one! [*She places her cloak on the arm-chair at the extreme right and adjusts her hat.*]

DES PR. [*Suddenly, pretending surprise.*] What, seriously, do you intend to go?

CYPR. Well——!

DES PR. Why, I suggested it as a joke, you know.

CYPR. [*Still adjusting hat.*] Oh, all right, so much the worse for you; I'm going to take you at your word; that's all there is to it!

DES PR. But what about Adhemar, you silly little creature?

CYPR. [*Taking her muff.*] Oh, Adhemar! Won't I have plenty of time to eat supper with Adhemar every day of my life?

DES PR. And supposing he gets angry?

CYPR. All right; let him!

DES PR. He'll give you a dreadful tongue-lashing!

CYPR. I'd like to see him! [*With dignity.*] Besides, could I dine with him, tête-à-tête, without your being there? What would that look like—to the servants?

DES PR. Well—an intended husband——

CYPR. Who knows that? The three of us—that's all right—or else you and I!

DES PR. That's better!

CYPR. [*Taking his arm and pressing against his side while she puts on her gloves.*] It's so 'cute—this idea of a divorce banquet.

DES PR. Sort of final tête-à-tête!

CYPR. Let's hurry. He will come. [*She rings the annunciator.*]

DES PR. [*Goes to get his hat and coat at rear, right, and looks toward the door.*] There he is!

CYPR. Adhemar?

DES PR. In the court!

CYPR. [*To JOSEPHA, who comes in, left front entrance.*] Josepha!

JOS. [*Behind the couch.*] Madame!

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] Monsieur is coming in—no! I mean Adhemar.

DES PR. That's it! Monsieur! That's it exactly!

CYPR. [*Greatly agitated.*] Tell him I have been forced to go out.

DES PR. [*Opening the garden door.*] Alone.

CYPR. Yes, alone! alone!

JOS. [*Surprised.*] Oh!

CYPR. [*Crossing over toward the right, toward DES PRUNELLES.*] Some one came to get me,—or any pretext you can think of. You won't be the worse off. Madame begs him to excuse her. Oh, he can eat here, if he wants to!

JOS. [*Stupefied.*] Yes, Madame!

DES PR. Here he comes!

CYPR. [*Pushing him before her.*] Oh, hurry! He will catch us!

[*They go out through the little door at right.*]

JOS. [*Following them with her gaze, stupefied.*] Ah!—They are going out together!

[*ADHEMAR comes in, rear, in full dress, with white tie, white gloves, and a bouquet of white roses in his hand. He has the air of a husband. BASTIEN appears at the threshold of the dining-room door, dressed like a waiter.*]

JOS. [*Hastily.*] Monsieur is not at home!

ADHE. [*Radiant, crossing to the right.*] Monsieur—a pile I care! Where is Madame?

JOS. Madame begs you to excuse her, Monsieur. She has just gone out!

ADHE. [*With a start.*] Gone out?

JOS. Yes, Monsieur. Her aunt is very ill.

ADHE. [*In consternation.*] What, already? [*Throwing his bouquet on the table.*] Her aunt? Well, we'll find out about this soon enough!—I'm going there—to her aunt's. [*He rushes out.*]

BAST. Supper is ready, Madame! [*He offers his arm to JOSEPHA, who has taken the bouquet on the table, and both enter the dining-room at left, second entrance, aping their employers. This rapid by-play should take place while the curtain is descending.*]

ACT III.

SCENE :—*A little private dining-room in a restaurant, quite elegant, with paneled walls. At rear, the chief entrance to the room, with double folding doors, opening into an antechamber, at rear of which is a sideboard for the service. At left front, the door of a wardrobe closet. Beyond it a piano with stool. Still further up, a panel and a window. Between the window and the rear door a small service table upon which are some plates, forks, spoons, knives, and a cruet-stand with bottles. At right front, a mantelpiece, upon which are a clock, two candelabra, a carafe and two finger-bowls. Beyond it a folding screen with seven leaves, folded, and of medium height. Next a panel and a door. In center stage a round table with covers laid for two. A chair at left of the table. At left, further over, a couch for two persons, with a cushion. At right further up than the mantelpiece, an arm-chair. A cluster of lights, not turned on. Two candles in each of the candelabra are burning. A chair in front of the window. JOSEPH opens the door at*

rear for DES PRUNELLES, who enters giving CYPRIENNE his arm. He is followed by two other waiters, one of whom carries a lighter.

JOSEPH. This little apartment will please Madame immensely.

DES PR. Yes.

CYPR. Only it isn't warm enough here.

JOSEPH. Oh, Madame, when the fire and the gas have been lighted—[*One of the waiters lights the fire, the other starts to light the gas.*]

DES PR. No, no; don't light the gas; the candelabra will do.

JOSEPH. [*To the first waiter.*] The candelabra. [*The first waiter lights the candelabra. The second prepares the service at rear. To DES PRUNELLES.*] It has been at least two years since Monsieur has been here. [*He assists him in taking off his overcoat.*]

DES PR. Isn't this Room No. 8?

JOSEPH. Monsieur recognizes it?

DES PR. Yes. They certainly have improved its appearance.

JOSEPH. And besides, there are some very useful improvements. At the rear, that antechamber; here, a private closet, where Madame can put away her hat and cloak.

CYPR. Yes, when I get warmed up a little. [*She goes to the grate-fire and toasts her feet.* JOSEPH carries DES PRUNELLES' hat and coat to the closet at left.]

DES PR. [*Taking off his gloves.*] Aren't you expecting Monsieur Clavignac this evening?

JOSEPH. [*As he comes back.*] Yes, Monsieur, room number 11, covers laid for six. Monsieur expects no one else? Covers for two only?

DES PR. Yes.

JOSEPH. Would Madame like to have the table placed nearer the fire?

CYPR. Yes, and open up the folding-screens; there's a little draft coming through there.

JOSEPH. Yes, Madame.

[*During what follows, the sub-waiters push the table over toward the fireplace, open up the screen, perpendicularly to the wall, bring the chair near to the table, move the arm-chair up to the table and finish serving by going for the silverware, etc., at rear.*]

JOSEPH. [*Handing the menu to DES PRUNELLES.*] Will Monsieur have some oysters? Marennes, Ostende?

DES PR. [*To CYPRIENNE, as he goes to sit down in the chair.*] Do you want any oysters, my dear?

CYPR. [*Warming her feet at the fireplace, sitting on the arm of the arm-chair.*] I don't care about them particularly.

DES PR. [*Sitting on the chair and consulting the menu on the table.*] Nor I either.

JOSEPH. [*Taking a note-book and pencil from his pocket, ready to write.*] Meat broth, Consommé Crécy, Saint-Germain?

CYPR. Meat broth!

JOSEPH. [*Writing.*] Fish—turbot, salmon?

DES PR. What, after the meat broth?

[*The two sub-waiters go out.*]

JOSEPH. Ah! quite so!

CYPR. I like crawfish better.

DES PR. Yes, no fish. You can give us for a wind-up some crawfish, bordelaise.

JOSEPH. Very good, Monsieur. For an entrée, would Monsieur like a timbale?

DES PR. No. Lamb cutlets, piping hot.

JOSEPH. [*Writing.*] Piping hot.

DES PR. Then——

JOSEPH. A hot bird? quail? We have some superb quail!

DES PR. No, partridge stuffed with truffles.

JOSEPH. [*Writing.*] Truffles!

DES PR. And a Russian salad—but a real one!

JOSEPH. I can recommend it.

DES PR. Then the crawfish. [*He sets the menu down on the table.*]

JOSEPH. [*Suggesting.*] Some little ice?

DES PR. No, no ices—unless Madame——

CYPR. No, just some fruit, that's all. Raisins especially.

DES PR. Get that?

JOSEPH. Yes, Monsieur. A delicious banquet, Monsieur, a fine selection of dishes, very fine. Coffee, I suppose?

DES PR. No. Neither Madame nor I take coffee evenings.

JOSEPH. Will Monsieur indicate his choice of wines?

DES PR. Same as usual: Champagne frappé.

JOSEPH. Moët, Cliquot?

DES PR. No, Roederer. And how about your Chambertin? Have you any more of it?

JOSEPH. Vintage of '68?

DES PR. Yes.

JOSEPH. We will have some for Monsieur.

DES PR. Hurry things up a little.

JOSEPH. Yes, Monsieur. [*To the waiters, who appear at rear.*] Come, hurry. [*He goes out.*]

DES PR. Well—are you getting warmed up?

CYPR. [*Taking off her cloak and her hat, which she places on the arm-chair.*] I'm beginning to. It seems that you are well acquainted in this place.

DES PR. I used to be.

CYPR. And you are expecting to become so again, I suppose?

DES PR. It's probable.

CYPR. Hm! So this is the place where Monsieur played the hero in his little farces?

DES PR. Oh, oh! Not so often as you think, my dear.

CYPR. I am sure that those waiters, seeing me with you, take me for——

DES PR. Oh, not quite so bad—but probably for my mistress—since they don't know you!

CYPR. And so I am now compromised?

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] Somewhat.

CYPR. [*Turning toward the mirror to arrange her hair.*] It certainly is queer!—Oh, look at all those names on the glass!

DES PR. Don't pay any attention to that, please.

CYPR. Why?

DES PR. The proprietor made them with his wife's diamond ring, to give the place an air of popularity.

CYPR. Oh!

JOSEPH. [*Entering at rear with a card on a tray.*] Monsieur—there is someone outside who has been told that Monsieur was in room No. 8, and who asks if Monsieur will receive him.

[JOSEPH hands the card to DES PRUNELLES. A waiter enters after JOSEPH, bringing the soup tureen, which he places on the sideboard at rear, and goes out.]

DES PR. [*Reading the card to CYPRIENNE.*] Adhemar !

CYPR. Oh !

DES PR. [*To JOSEPH.*] All right. Wait a minute. [*JOSEPH discreetly retires to the rear and stands at the threshold, with one of the folding doors open. To CYPRIENNE, in a stage whisper.*] Shall I invite him in ?

CYPR. [*Excitedly.*] No, certainly not !

DES PR. But think, my dear——

CYPR. No ! no ! I won't have it !

DES PR. It will be very difficult after having invited him at home——

CYPR. [*Tearing up the card.*] Let him eat there ! What does he come here for ? He can't let us have our divorce in peace ! [*She throws the pieces into the fire.*]

DES PR. [*Rising.*] All right, as he doesn't know that you're here, I'll send him away. Go in there for a moment. [*He points to the closet at left.*]

CYPR. [*Taking her hat and cloak from the arm-chair and crossing the stage.*] Yes, that's the way to do it. But hurry I'm hungry. [*She enters the closet.*]

DES PR. [*To JOSEPH.*] Let him in.

JOSEPH. [*Opening the door at rear and talking into one of the wings.*] Would Monsieur like to——

ADHE. [*Coming in.*] Ah ! May I come in ?

DES PR. Surely, come right in !

[*JOSEPH goes out.*]

ADHE. [*He is wet through and has an umbrella.*] Allow me to beg your pardon, my dear Monsieur. Am I disturbing you ? [*Places his hat on the couch at left.*]

DES PR. Well, rather. I'm expecting somebody.
[*Escorting him to the right and offering him a chair.*]
Make yourself at home.—But how did you manage to find me?

ADHE. [*Placing his umbrella against the back cushion of the chair.*] At the club they told me that you were going to eat here with Monsieur de Clavignac.

DES PR. Oh, yes. Well—what's up?

ADHE. [*Sitting on the chair.*] Ah, my dear Monsieur, you see a man who is in deep trouble! It was agreed, wasn't it, that we should dine together?

DES PR. Not me! You and Cyprienne.

ADHE. Precisely, I and Cyprienne—I mean your wife—that is to say, no, my wife—oh, our wife!

DES PR. Yes!

ADHE. I came; nobody was there! I was told that you had just gone out.

DES PR. Quite so.

ADHE. And Cyprienne, too!

DES PR. Did she go out?

ADHE. After you did.

DES PR. Where did they say she was going?

ADHE. [*Looking at him with a piteous air.*] To see her aunt, who was sick.

DES PR. Ah!

ADHE. [*Suddenly.*] Ah! you knew nothing of it, did you?

DES PR. No!

ADHE. [*Rising quickly.*] I fancied not. I have just come from her aunt's. The old lady is as sound as a dollar. And no Cyprienne there, any more than in my pocket.

DES PR. I beg pardon. You are speaking of aunt——?

ADHE. Guerin, the widow Guerin, Boulevard du Temple.

DES PR. Oh! that isn't the one at all!

ADHE. No?

DES PR. Oh, no! It's Aunt Nicole, who has the asthma and is eighty-three years old, No. 92 Rue de Paris.

ADHE. Oh! that's far! and the weather is something fierce!

DES PR. [*Going up to the window.*] Is it raining?

ADHE. [*Goes and takes his hat from the couch.*] Rain and snow mixed, and not a cab in sight!

DES PR. [*Coming down again.*] The devil!

[*Here CYPRIENNE opens the closet door and listens.*]

ADHE. If I was only sure! Tell me now, between you and me, do you have much faith in this "aunt" story, eh?

DES PR. I?

ADHE. Yes.

DES PR. Oh, I don't know.

ADHE. The whole thing looks deucedly like a humbug to me. Don't you think so?

DES PR. Well, say! you know that I have no opinion to offer on the matter. It doesn't concern me any more.

ADHE. Yes, but as my predecessor you can enlighten me, perhaps. Has she ever sprung this "aunt" story before, on you?

DES PR. Not that I know of. Why do you ask?

ADHE. To find out whether it's a dodge that she was accustomed to employ.

CYPR. [*Behind the door, to herself.*] Oh!

DES PR. Do you mistrust her?

ADHE. Well, I've discovered that the woman is pretty artful—I've seen her twist you round her finger——

DES PR. Oh——!

ADHE. She certainly led you a merry dance!

DES PR. Yes, I stood it, but how about you?

ADHE. Oh, with me those tricks wouldn't go down at all.

DES PR. No! of course not.

ADHE. Not by a dam sight! I wouldn't be such an easy mark as you were. [*Putting on his hat with a lordly air.*] She'll have to toe the line, with me!

DES PR. [*With a sidelong glance at CYPRIENNE.*] That's the way to talk, old sport!

ADHE. Where did you say the aunt lived?

DES PR. Nicole? Ninety-two rue de Paris.

ADHE. [*Sitting down on the couch.*] Oh, dash it! [*Turns up his trousers. To himself.*] If it wasn't for the four hundred thousand francs—— But there you are! [*Rising.*] Well——I'm off! Thousand pardons—and hope you enjoy the meal! [*He starts toward the rear.*]

DES PR. Thanks. [*Calling him back and holding up his umbrella.*] Your umbrella!

ADHE. [*Coming back.*] Oh, that's so. Thanks. [*They shake each other's hand, with the umbrella in ADHEMAR'S possession.*]

DES PR. Pleasant journey! [ADHEMAR goes out. DES PRUNELLES closes the door and goes toward the closet door, crossing behind the couch. To himself.] I'd fix that fellow if he couldn't play my game better!

CYPR. [*Showing herself, in a whisper.*] Gone?

DES PR. [*Feigning that he is about to call ADHEMAR back.*] Are you sorry? Shall I call him back?

CYPR. [*Hastily, whispering.*] No! no! certainly not!

DES PR. [*Coming back toward center stage.*] Poor fellow! He is going to the devil knows where!

CYPR. Well, let him trot! You did perfectly right. Did you ever see the like? The man has the effrontery to suspect me already!

DES PR. It's pretty bad.

CYPR. And my "tricks!" And "the woman!" And it's a "humbug!" And I "led you a merry dance!" Are those things that people should say?

DES PR. No!

CYPR. Oh, and his lordly talk! [*Imitating him.*] "That wouldn't go down with me at all—" Hm, hm! "She'd have to toe the line, with me!" Well! in the first place, I'll do as I please!

DES PR. [*Adding emphasis to her assertion.*] Absolutely!

CYPR. [*Crossing to the right.*] Fine talk! Fine talk! Oh, he's stupid, that Adhemar!

[*JOSEPH and the two under-waiters enter at rear.*

JOSEPH is carrying a plate of fruit, which he places on the table at rear, and serves the broth.]

DES PR. Calm yourself! [*To the waiters.*] You may serve. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Calm yourself, and sit down.

[*They sit down at the table, DES PRUNELLES in the small chair, CYPRIENNE in the arm-chair. The two waiters serve each one a plate of soup and go out at rear with JOSEPH, leaving the door open. JOSEPH is seen at rear.*]

CYPR. The broth is nearly cold—taste it—thanks to him!

DES PR. [*Talking while he drinks his soup.*] Good Lord, little one—you've got to learn that a husband and a lover are two absolutely different things. The young man is acting his part. He's not very skilful, I'll grant you that.

CYPR. Oh, and querulous, and tiresome, and——

DES PR. [*Interrupting.*] But that's not his fault. All that is the customary manner of a husband. Why was I querulous this morning, and why am I in such good humor this evening? Because this morning I was the husband, and now I am no longer so. It's his turn to be quarrelsome; he is defending himself.

CYPR. Honestly, he bids fair to be more troublesome than you.

DES PR. Naturally; he's younger. And he has not seen as much of life as I have. [*JOSEPH and the two waiters come in again. JOSEPH brings a bottle of champagne in a pail which he places at right of DES PRUNELLES. The first waiter brings the platter of lamb cutlets, which he places in the middle of the table. The second waiter takes away the soup plates. After this, the three go out.*] But I will not show my bad taste by traducing the man—[*Intending to prevent the waiters from understanding.*—] to whom I cede what remains of my affairs. On the contrary, I credit him with a superior order of intelligence, with everything that will make the new enterprise prosper. He will not escape the difficulties of the situation. [*The waiters shut the door. He places the champagne pail at his left, between CYPRIENNE and himself.*] To sum the matter up, all husbands can be resolved into a single general type—the husband; and all lovers into a general type—the lover. The husband has all the faults; the lover has all the merits. That's understood.—

In reality, the husband has only one fault—that of being the husband. And the lover has but one good quality—that of being the lover. [CYPRIENNE *pours out some champagne for herself.*] This is so true that the same man can be at one and the same time the highly tedious husband of his own wife and the highly agreeable lover of some other man's wife. The difference is not in the individual, it is in the function that he performs. [*He pours out champagne for himself.* JOSEPH *enters with a bottle in a wicker basket.*]

CYPR. Then, is it inadvisable to marry?

DES PR. Oh, there are just as many disadvantages in not marrying. [*He drinks.*]

CYPR. Well, what?

DES PR. Oh, Lord! [*To JOSEPH, who is about to pour him out a glass of wine.*] No, I'll pour out myself.

JOSEPH. [*Placing the basket on the table at DES PRUNELLES' right.*] 1868, Monsieur.

DES PR. All right—you can go—and see to it that we are left alone—I will ring when I want you. [*JOSEPH goes out, closing the door.*] You must be reasonable, my dear—I will speak of the matter quite freely, sha'n't I? seeing that we are going to get a divorce. There is neither wife nor husband here now—just two good friends, two boon companions, who are having a chat in the café, with their elbows on the table—[*Both drink at the same time.*] All right then—don't expect of poor Adhemar what he can't offer you—passion—ecstasy—all that! Content yourself with what he is able to give you, and if he gives it regularly, agreeably, be happy. True felicity does not consist in excesses—heavens, no! A good regular life, a good general average, that's happiness.

CYPR. Yes, if the wife is good—really good!

DES PR. [*Ring.*] She always is with a few mutual concessions. [*Re-enter at rear JOSEPH and the two waiters. JOSEPH holds in one hand a plate and in the other the partridge, and goes to the table, at DES PRUNELLES' right. The first waiter, with a plate, goes to the table, between CYPRIENNE and DES PRUNELLES. The second waiter carries a salad dish, which he places on the table at rear.*] To show you the truth of my remark: in Switzerland there used to be a very wise custom. I don't know whether it is still practised. [*To JOSEPH.*] Set it down, I'll cut it up. [*DES PRUNELLES and CYPRIENNE hand their plates to the first waiter, who places in front of CYPRIENNE the plate that he has in his hand, while JOSEPH does likewise with DES PRUNELLES', and places the partridge on the table in the place of the cutlets, which he takes away. The two waiters go out and JOSEPH goes to the table at rear to season the salad. DES PRUNELLES talks while cutting the partridge.*] When a couple of married people wanted a divorce, they locked them in a room for a week, with a table, one plate, one chair and one bed. And they handed them things to eat through a window.

CYPR. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha!

JOSEPH. [*Coming down to DES PRUNELLES and offering him a bottle full of pepper sauce.*] Would Monsieur like some—?

DES PR. Plenty! [*JOSEPH goes back to season the salad.*] At the end of the week's imprisonment, people came—rap, rap! [*He raps on the table with his knife.*]

JOSEPH. [*Turning round quickly.*] Monsieur?

DES PR. No! not you! [*Returning to the subject.*] “Hey, within there, where are you? How about the divorce?”

CYPR. Profound silence! They had eaten each other up!

DES PR. No! nothing of the sort! Three times out of five, they didn't want a divorce any more! [JOSEPH brings the salad bowl to the table and is about to go. DES PRUNELLES calls him back. Wait a minute! [He tastes the salad.] Good! You can go. JOSEPH puts the salad bowl down and goes out.]

CYPR. [Laughing.] Oh, so you think that if we were locked up——

DES PR. [Serving.] Oh, I'm not talking about our case at all. You and I are people of judgment. We know what we are doing. That is understood.

CYPR. [Gaily.] It wouldn't be so bad here!

DES PR. No, generally speaking.—What I am eating here is very good.

CYPR. Yes, but peppery.

DES PR. Your glass. [He pours out some of the Chambertin for her and himself.] And then, during those seven days, we could at least make one another's acquaintance.

CYPR. [Laughing.] What, acquaintance?

DES PR. Yes.

CYPR. [Breaking out into laughter.] Oh! how silly you are! Why, we've been married for two years!

DES PR. And twenty-two days. Twenty-sixth of October. [They raise their glasses and drink.]

CYPR. And you think we don't know each other yet?

DES. PR. Not in the least!

CYPR. Oh!

DES PR. [Serving.] Come now, won't you admit that you've never seen me in such a good humor?

CYPR. That's true.

DES PR. Then you see, don't you, that you don't know me? And how should you know me? During two years, we lived in intimacy for only fifteen days!

CYPR. [*Denying with a laugh.*] Oh! more than that!

DES PR. [*Ring.*] I'll prove it to you if you wish. [*Rings again.*] Shall we have a bet on it? [*To JOSEPH, who enters.*] Waiter, have you a pencil?

JOSEPH. Yes, Monsieur.

DES PR. Let me have it.—All right. [*JOSEPH goes out.* DES PRUNELLES pushes back the plates, glasses, etc., in order to make an open space for himself on the table, which he moves over close to the fireplace. CYPRIENNE aids him and places the champagne pail at his left. Then DES PRUNELLES takes the menu and brings his chair close up to CYPRIENNE'S arm-chair.]

DES PR. We are liquidating. Let's make inventory. [*Making some figures on the back of the menu.*] Now—two years and twenty-two days of married life, that is, 730 plus 22, total 752 days, which gives us, in hours—I'll give you good measure; I'll call your day twelve hours.

CYPR. Only twelve?

DES PR. Let's be fair. I never see you mornings until noon, at luncheon. We leave each other, to go to our sleeping apartments, between eleven o'clock and one o'clock in the morning, don't we? Therefore, on an average—Let us consider nothing but the average—from noon to midnight, that's exactly twelve hours in each other's company.

CYPR. That's true.

DES PR. Now, 752 multiplied by twelve make—
[*Making some figures and adding them between his*

teeth very quickly.] Two, four, five, fourteen—Nine thousand and twenty-four hours of married life.

CYPR. [*Bursting into a laugh.*] And we didn't have time to get acquainted with each other—in nine thousand? [*She rises, and with her glass in her hand, goes to warm her feet.*]

DES PR. Oh, but wait! Having settled that, in a day of twelve hours, how many hours are we together—alone, tête-à-tête?

CYPR. Five, six hours a day?

DES PR. Not on your life! I don't count meals; the servants are around.—Call it an hour, and I'm liberal.

CYPR. All right; one hour a day!

DES PR. [*Drinking every now and then as he talks and commencing to be lively.*] Now, let's deduct the days when we receive, which of course can't be called being together; special dinners, theater, visits, vacation trips, and so on.—You'll grant me for all that a reduction of more than one-half?

CYPR. Call it three-quarters!

DES PR. Then there remains a quarter of an hour, on the average; that is to say, in nine thousand hours of married life, one hundred and eighty-eight of intimacy!

CYPR. [*Surprised.*] Oh!

DES PR. There are the figures!—And besides, a good third was spent in squabbling and in turning our backs to each other!

CYPR. [*Leaning against his shoulder.*] Yes, but then—that was intimacy!

DES PR. All right, I'll count it in. Divide by twelve—fifteen and a fraction. Therefore, final result: In two years of married life we have had fifteen days and four hours of intimacy! I was four hours out of the way!

CYPR. [*Bursting out with laughter.*] Ha, ha !
No, it isn't possible !

DES PR. The figures !—

CYPR. Ha, ha, ha !

DES PR. It amuses you ?

[JOSEPH enters with a platter of crawfish. Seeing CYPRIENNE in DES PRUNELLES' lap, he advances with caution, places the platter discreetly at DES PRUNELLES' right and makes off. At the moment when he goes out, closing the door, DES PRUNELLES and CYPRIENNE, who have heard him, turn their backs on the door, and DES PRUNELLES begins his computations again.]

DES PR. We can establish the fact without exaggeration, can't we, that love had its three good hours a week ?

CYPR. [*Bursting into laughter.*] Ha, ha ! [*Embracing him.*] Oh ! you rogue ! you're so funny !

[*A sound of voices is heard at the rear door. The voices are those of the waiters, who are trying to prevent ADHEMAR from entering.*]

THE WAITERS. [*Without.*] No, Monsieur !—
You can't !

ADHE. I want to get in !—I will get in !

[*The discussion continues.*]

DES PR. It's Adhemar !

CYPR. [*Jumping to her feet.*] Again ! Why, he's a regular bore, that creature !

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Hide yourself ! [*He pushes CYPRIENNE behind the folding screen and shoves the table back as far as the post of the mantelpiece.*]

CYPR. But throw him out for good and all this

time, you must! I'm sick of this! [*She seats herself in the arm-chair up against the screen. At the same instant the door is thrown violently open and ADHEMAR rushes into the room, fighting off the waiters. The rain drips from him, and water from the umbrella wets the stage. His hair and mustache are in disorder.—During what follows, CYPRIENNE, seated at the table in view of the audience, eats some crawfish, then dips her fingers in the finger-bowl.*]

DES PR. [*Napkin in hand.*] Well, well, what's the meaning of this?

ADHE. [*Extremely hoarse.*] Monsieur—words fail me——

DES PR. Yes, it's annoying——!

ADHE. To characterize your conduct! I have just come from Aunt Nicole's——

DES PR. Ah! how is she?

ADHE. How is she? She is no more! [*With a quick movement, he throws his umbrella under his left arm and wets DES PRUNELLES, JOSEPH and the under-waiters, who wipe themselves off with their napkins.*]

DES PR. Indeed!

ADHE. Dead three months ago!

DES PR. Ah! I didn't know it—Such a distant aunt—[*He makes a sign to JOSEPH and the waiters to retire.*]

ADHE. [*Opening his umbrella and leaving it at left to dry.*] Three miles, going and coming! And no carriage—! And no Cyprienne! I returned to your house with all speed, to see if she hadn't come back. And all I found there was your Josepha and your Bastien, who were eating your dinner and drinking your Pomard! It works speedily, your Pomard! When they saw me, those blackguards were wallowing in booze—especially the maid! “Looking

for Madame? Oh! well, if you're running after Madame, you're a fine jackass!"

DES PR. Phew!

ADHE. "Jackass!" That word was an eye-opener! I rushed back to the *Grand Vatel*. I spoke to the woman downstairs, at the foot of the staircase, the one that opens the oysters. She knows me quite well. I said: "Did you see Monsieur Des Prunelles when he came in?" "Yes, Monsieur." "Was there a lady with him?" "Yes." "Describe her," I said. "Small, plump, a regular quail." [*Uttering a savage cry.*] Ah! "Jackass" is explained! I have been jobbed! You are eating here together, you and she! This is disloyal, you turned her over to me; and you are treading our agreement under foot!

DES PR. [*Stammering a little and slightly "under the influence."*] My dear successor—consider a minute! If she were here—!

ADHE. Behind the screen!

[CYPRIENNE gives vent to a little laugh.]

DES PR. Why, if she were here, she would now be in your arms!

ADHE. Oh! a man never knows. Women are like weathervanes. Perhaps she now thinks it amusing to deceive me with your assistance.

CYPR. [*Uttering a little involuntary cry of protestation.*] Oh!—

ADHE. That cry! She's here! [*He rushes toward the screen.*]

DES PR. [*Grabbing him by the tail of his overcoat and making him pirouette.*] Beg pardon, that's one of my lady friends.

ADHE. Exhibit her!

DES PR. It's not the proper thing.

ADHE. Have her talk, then!

DES PR. Not that either! But here's what I will do. And I consider myself very accommodating to suggest this.

ADHE. What?

DES PR. Of course you would know Cyprienne's charming foot when you saw it?

ADHE. Would I?

DES PR. All right! I trust Madame will be so good as to show her foot, and then you will be satisfied—[*Approaching the screen.*] If you consent, Madame, rap on your plate. [CYPRIENNE *raps gently twice on her plate with a knife.*]

ADHE. Ah!

DES PR. [*Standing up against the screen.*] Don't move!—Are you ready? [ADHEMAR, *at left, bends down to see better*; DES PRUNELLES *also bends down against the screen.* CYPRIENNE, *on the other side of the screen, is seated on the chair.* DES PRUNELLES *to CYPRIENNE.*] Kindly have the goodness to cause your shoe to glide softly along the edge of the folding screen in such manner as to make it appear outside of the lower board. [CYPRIENNE *very quietly executes the movement indicated and the point of the shoe is just seen outside the screen.*] That's it! All right! Sufficient. [*To ADHEMAR.*] Well—is that her foot?

ADHE. [*With a gesture implying despair.*] No!

DES PR. } [*Together.*] Ah! [CYPRIENNE

CYPR. } *hastily withdraws her foot, executing a kick in the air in the direction of ADHEMAR.*]

ADHE. [*Standing; upright.*] Ah, Madame—I am ashamed of myself; I beg your pardon! [*To DES PRUNELLES, shaking hands with him and pointing to his foot.*] My compliments!

DES PR. Thanks.

ADHE. [*Taking up his umbrella and closing it.*]
But where the devil is that woman, then?

DES PR. Well, say! that's your affair, go look for her!

ADHE. I'm dying of hunger; I'll go and get a cup of bouillon. [*He goes up toward rear.*]

DES PR. [*Bringing him back.*] Better get some of that balsam-fir cough-medicine instead; you're going to have the grippe.

ADHE. [*About to sneeze.*] It's horrible, Monsieur, it's horrible!—[*He sneezes, going up right.*—] my situation, I mean! Ever since she is mine, she is less mine than when she wasn't mine!

DES PR. It often happens that way.

ADHE. [*At the rear door.*] Did you say, "Balsam-fir?"

DES PR. Boiling, boiling hot!

ADHE. Thanks. [*He sneezes and goes out.* DES PRUNELLES *shuts the door after him.*]

DES PR. Heaven bless you!

CYPR. [*Bursting into a laugh and throwing open the screen.*] Well, what an idiot! What an idiot! He didn't even recognize my foot!

DES PR. [*Gaily, returning to her.*] That's the way one is deceived in these gallants! [*Touching the tip of her foot.*] For my part, that was the first thing I admired in you.

CYPR. Oh, goodness me, this is too much!—And that is the man who has been courting me for four months!

DES PR. [*Laughing.*] There you are!

CYPR. [*Crossing to left and sitting down on the couch with a laugh. She is slightly "under the influence."*] Well, but isn't he stupid? Isn't—he—stupid? [*Tapping on the cushion.*] Is it permissible to be as stupid as that?

DES PR. The fact stares you in the face.

CYPR. Hm! do you think that it will be a pleasure to deceive that fellow?

DES PR. [*Going toward her.*] Certainly—some day!

CYPR. Some day? Hm, right off!

DES PR. What!

CYPR. Why, merely on having the idea! You'll admit he deserves it?

DES PR. Certainly, if our roles were to be exchanged, and I were the lover——?

CYPR. Yes?—do you think so?

DES PR. [*Seating himself close to her on the couch.*] Eh? do *you* think so? he the husband and I the lover!

CYPR. Yes.—Oh, la, la.

BOTH. [*With an energetic gesture.*] Ah!

DES PR. [*Putting his arm round her.*] With mutual transport, one for the other!

CYPR. [*Seizing his arm.*] Yes, yes!

DES PR. [*Letting go.*] In place of the weariness that now separates us!

CYPR. Weariness! You can't be so fatigued as all that from your twenty-six days——

DES PR. I am speaking only of you!

CYPR. But I'm not tired of anything except ADHEMAR! [*She crosses to left of the couch and sits down at the piano, singing and playing:*

“ ‘Twas hardly worth the troublement
To make this change in the government.”]

[The original has :

“ C' n'était pas la peine assurément
De changer de gouvernement.”

The words are from a famous French *chanson*.]

DES PR. [*Kneeling on the right side of the couch.*] Take care. He may be somewhere around here taking his cup of bouillon !

CYPR. With his umbrella ! [*Bursting into a laugh.*] Ha, ha, ha ! Oh, my heart ! [*Exhausted, she reclines on the piano with her elbows.*]

DES PR. [*Seated on the couch.*] What is it that makes you laugh ?

CYPR. [*Without looking at him.*] Nothing, an idea, a silly thought ! something that can't be said. [*She plays a very tender waltz tune.*]

DES PR. [*After two or three measures of the air, without looking at her.*] And then it wouldn't be on the square !

CYPR. [*Still playing.*] It wouldn't be on the square.

DES PR. For at present, you know, you are no longer mine.

CYPR. [*Allured by her idea and continuing to play.*] That's so !

DES PR. That sort of thing is denied us !

CYPR. [*Who now plays with but one hand.*] Denied ?

DES PR. It is forbidden !

CYPR. [*Hastily.*] Forbidden ? [*She stops playing.*]

DES PR. It would be a transgression—a crime !

CYPR. [*Turning quickly around on the piano stool and finding herself face to face with DES PRU- NELLES, but separated from him by the couch.*] A crime ? Do you think so ? It would be a crime ?

DES PR. Cyprienne, don't look at me that way ! [*He turns around on the couch, facing the public.*]

CYPR. [*Rising.*] Heavens, I'm warm ! My mouth is burning up with your old crawfish ! [*She goes to the table at rear, takes a bunch of raisins and*

returns to DES PRUNELLES, behind the couch, eating the raisins.] Oh, how good these are!—So you think it would be altogether abominable, do you?

DES PR. Oh, Lord, yes!

CYPR. [*After having taken a raisin for herself and placing one in his mouth.*] Here, darling!—It would be very bad—very bad! Are you quite sure?

DES PR. [*Resting his head on the back of the couch.*] Oh, CYPRIENNE!

CYPR. [*Same by-play, eyes fixed on eyes.*] Here, my love!

DES PR. Deceive that man? Oh! [*She puts her arm round his neck. A sound of voices without, at rear.*] Hey?

ADHE. [*Without.*] You are inside there, Madame! I have recognized your voice! but I shall have my revenge! Tremble! tremble! Vengeance approaches!

DES PR. Vengeance?

WAITERS. [*Dragging ADHEMAR away.*] Quick, quick! let's get him out of here!

ADHE. But it's my wife!

THE VOICES. To the guard-house with him!
[*THE VOICES are lost in the distance.*]

DES PR. They're gone! [*A rapping on the door at rear.*]

CYPR. Someone is rapping!

DES PR. Someone rapping?

JOSEPH. [*Without.*] Monsieur!

CYPR. It's the waiter!

DES PR. The waiter? [*He goes up.*]

JOSEPH. [*Rapping at the door.*] Open quick, Monsieur!

DES PR. [*Holding the door ajar for JOSEPH, who is half concealed from the audience.*] What is it?

JOSEPH. A policeman is taking him to the guard-house opposite, but maybe they will come back. If Madame, in order to disguise herself, would change clothes with me—

[*Gestures of refusal on the part of CYPRIENNE, who has run to the window.*]

DES PR. No. [*He pushes the waiter out.*]

JOSEPH. They do such things in Paris, Monsieur!

DES PR. No, no, thanks! [*He closes the door, locks it, and goes to the table to pour himself out a glass of champagne.*]

CYPR. [*Standing on the chair to look out of the window and laughing loudly.*] Oh, it's true! The policeman is taking him away! Ha, ha! the rain is dripping off him! He's a regular gutter! Ha, ha! how funny he is that way! And ugly!

DES PR. [*Glass in hand, going to CYPRIENNE.*] Isn't he?

CYPR. Good Lord, how homely he is! [*As she jumps down from the chair she falls into DES PRU- NELLES' arms.*]

DES PR. That's nice—all the champagne on my suit.

CYPR. Oh, my poor boy! Now! [*She starts to wipe it off with her handkerchief.*] There!

DES PR. It will be better to place it before the fire. [*She helps him take off his coat, one of the sleeves of which turns back.*]

CYPR. [*Taking the coat.*] Give it to me. [*She places the coat on the arm-chair in front of the chimney.*] Oh! that fire! I'm suffocating! [*She undoes the upper part of her corsage.*]

DES PR. Revenge himself—for what? What does it all mean? a duel?

CYPR. [*Running up to him.*] A duel! I forbid you to fight, do you hear?

DES PR. But——

CYPR. [*Seizing him in her arms.*] I don't want you to fight!—He might kill you!

DES PR. Nonsense!

CYPR. And for him—for that man—oh, heavens, *that* man!—How could it have been possible? I didn't see him as he is—I was insane! [*Falling upon the couch.*] Oh, I am grievously to blame! [*She turns quickly toward DES PRUNELLES, who is standing near her, gazing at the door at rear; she seizes his arm and causes him to fall on his knees before her.*] Fall at my feet, unhappy man, and beg my forgiveness!—

DES PR. Hey?

CYPR. —For having cast me into the arms of that idiot, and wanting to make him my husband!

DES PR. [*On his knees, thunderstruck.*] But——

CYPR. Why, he is odious, do you understand? He is ridiculous, he is ugly, he is stupid, your Adhemar! Why, I hate him, I want you to know! And I don't love anybody but you! Tell me that you love me still, more and more, forever! Say it quick!

DES PR. I——

CYPR. And that you repent having thrown me off! And that you will never leave me again! Never! never! never!

DES PR. Never! I——

CYPR. That's enough! you are repentant! I will forget everything! I forgive you! Come to my arms! I adore you!

[*Three knocks are heard at the door.*]

A VOICE. Open, in the name of the law!

CYPR. [*To DES PRUNELLES.*] The police !
[*Terror-stricken.*] Why ?

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Who knows ? Outrage against public decency—scandal in a place of public entertainment—!

CYPR. Ah !

POLICE OFFICER. [*Without.*] You refuse to open ?

CYPR. [*Noticing the disorder of her toilette.*] Don't open !—I'm done for !—Wait a minute, your coat !
[*She goes to the fireplace and throws him his coat.*]

OFFICER. [*Without.*] Open, or I'll have the door broken in ! [*CYPRIENNE conceals herself behind the screen.*]

DES PR. I'm coming, I'm coming ! [*He goes up and unlocks the door. The police enter quickly. Two policemen enter behind the principal officer and take their places at rear, right. JOSEPH and the other waiters stand at rear, left. ADHEMAR, with his umbrella, passes behind them and appears between the piano and the couch. In the vestibule behind the door are some onlookers, etc.*]

DES PR. [*Stupefied, trying to put on his coat.*] Monsieur le Commissaire, I beg your pardon—

OFFICER. [*Quickly, pointing to the table, which is in disorder.*] Monsieur, you are here with a woman ! Don't deny it !

DES PR. Yes, Monsieur le Commissaire—my wife.

OFFICER. Your wife !—Well, we'll see about that. [*Pointing to ADHEMAR, who comes down left.*] Monsieur here has been making such an uproar that he was brought before me, and he claims, to justify himself, that you are here with *his* wife !

DES PR. Adhemar ! [*He bursts out laughing. All present look at ADHEMAR with compassion.*]

ADHE. [*Aside.*] Deceiving the police, that means two months in jail; but that makes no difference to me, I've spoiled their orgy.

DES PR. Well, that's good; that certainly is good! Just think, my love. [*Talking to CYPRIENNE over the screen.*] Did you hear that? Adhemar your husband! [*CYPRIENNE's hands are seen above the screen as she raises them to heaven in token of protest.*] Look, Monsieur le Commissaire! She writhes at the thought! Observe her gestures!

OFFICER. They are indecent, just like your appearance! Fix your sleeve!

DES PR. All right, let's fix everything, Monsieur le Commissaire. The real husband is myself!

OFFICER. You are adding imprudence to outrage.

DES PR. But, holy Moses!—

OFFICER. And no cursing! Respect the servants of the law!

DES PR. But—!

OFFICER. Silence! [*DES PRUNELLES, intimidated, finishes putting on his coat and reaches the extreme right. The OFFICER to ADHEMAR, with thoughtfulness and compassion.*] Monsieur, I am about to question Madame— Perhaps it would be better for you to be absent a moment.—This folding-screen—[*ADHEMAR holds his handkerchief to his eyes, then wipes his face sorrowfully.*] The probable condition in which——

ADHE. [*In a faint voice in which hoarseness takes the place of emotion.*] No, Monsieur! I will be strong! thanks!

OFFICER. [*After a gesture of consent, turning toward the screen and tapping on the frame with his cane.*] Madame!

CYPR. [*Behind the screen.*] Monsieur?

OFFICER. Are you presentable?

CYPR. [*Opening the screen.*] Certainly, Monsieur! [*She comes out, with her hair somewhat disarranged and her corsage buttoned the wrong way.—Slight sensation.*]

ADHE. Ah! faithless woman! [*He falls back on the couch.*] JOSEPH places a bottle of vinegar to his nose. The other waiters fold the screen against the wall.]

DES PR. [*Rising.*] Well, this certainly is too ridiculous, that a man and his wife——

OFFICER. [*Going to him.*] Be silent you!

DES PR. [*Intimidated by the POLICEMEN.*] Free speech is prohibited! That's the way they treat us! [*He sinks back into the chair in front of the table.*]

OFFICER. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Madame, you will recognize the fact that you have been found here with Monsieur, under conditions which do not permit one to doubt that your relations with him are——?

CYPR. Of continual, Monsieur!

ONLOOKERS. [*Shocked.*] Oh!

OFFICER. [*To ADHEMAR, speaking to him behind CYPRIENNE, who separates the two.*] Take heart, Monsieur. [*Same action, looking in front of CYPRIENNE.*] Take heart. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] Well, then, you admit it?

CYPR. [*Pointing to DES PRUNELLES.*] There's my husband!

OFFICER. [*Ironically.*] Ah! you also make that pretence, do you? But in that case, if Monsieur there is your husband—[*Pointing to ADHEMAR.*]—who is Monsieur here?

CYPR. He? An imbecile!

ADHE. [*Handing the bottle to JOSEPH and getting up.*] Ah! Cyprienne!

CYPR. Don't come near me, you! I'll scratch your eyes out!

OFFICER. And you say this is not your husband?

CYPR. Why, yonder's my husband. There he is! the man I love! [*She tries to rush into DES PRUNELLES' arms.*]

OFFICER. [*Placing himself in front of her and forcing her toward the extreme left.*] Such barefaced impudence!

DES PR. [*Exasperated, rising.*] Why, officer, are you blind? Anyone can tell you she's my wife. Listen: in room No. 11, there are friends of mine. [*OFFICER turns to JOSEPH.*]

JOSEPH. Gone!

DES PR. My luck!

OFFICER. [*To another POLICEMAN.*] Hurry out and bring up a cab for Madame, so that we can go to the station and draw up the charges.

JOSEPH. Why, there's a thousand people in front of the café!

CYPR. [*Weeping.*] Oh! before the crowd!

DES PR. Like a pair of criminals! [*They rush toward each other, meet in center stage, and fall into each other's arms.*]

OFFICER. [*Beside himself with rage.*] Well, separate them, will you? They are mad!

[*The two assisting POLICEMEN lay hold of DES PRUNELLES. The OFFICER tries to get CYPRIENNE away from her embrace of DES PRUNELLES.*]

CYPR. [*Clinging fast to DES PRUNELLES.*] No! With him! Unto death!

DES PR. With her! [*They are forcibly separated.*]

CYPR. [*Furious.*] Robbers! Cut-throats! [*She sinks exhausted on the couch.*]

DES PR. [*At rear, right.*] Why, this is idiotic! It is unspeakable! And within a few steps of the official who married us! I'll run and get him! [*He profits by the open door rushing out at rear.*]

OFFICER. Stop him!

A POLICEMAN.

JOSEPH.

WAITERS.

} [*Rushing after him and shouting.*]
} Stop! Stop him!

CYPR. Henri! Wait for me! [*She makes an attempt to follow him.*]

OFFICER. [*Barring her egress.*] No, Madame, no! You will not follow him! [*The other POLICEMAN has opened the door of the closet.*] Go in there!

ADHE. [*Supplicating.*] Cyprienne!

CYPR. [*Crossing in front of the OFFICER.*] Don't come near me—or I'll box your ears!

ADHE. Oh, Cyprienne! Forgive and forget!

CYPR. Take that, you scoundrel! [*She gives him a violent slap and goes into the closet.*]

ADHE. [*Pirouetting and falling on the couch.*]
Oh!

OFFICER. [*While the POLICEMAN locks the closet door.*] Monsieur, that will be included in the charge. We must catch the other one! [*He rushes toward the entrance door, followed by the POLICEMAN and by ADHEMAR, who holds his hand to his cheek. They go out.*]

DES PR. [*Re-entering by the door at right, followed at a short distance by JOSEPH, the second POLICEMAN and the WAITERS.*] Failed! Tracked! [*He is surrounded.*] I surrender! Put down your guns!

JOSEPH. We must lock him in! [*He pushes the couch and goes to the door of the closet.*]

WAITERS. Yes, you must lock him in !

DES PR. [*Crossing in front of the waiters.*]

Don't touch me !

JOSEPH. There, in the closet ! [*He opens the door.*]

DES PR. I'll go !—But don't touch me !—Don't touch me, or I'll box your ears ! [*He enters the closet where CYPRIENNE is already concealed.*]

JOSEPH. [*Locking the door.*] There ! that will keep him quiet !—Where is the woman ?

ALL. [*Looking.*] Disappeared !

JOSEPH. Skipped ! Let's run after her ! [*They are about to rush out.*]

OFFICER.	}	[<i>Entering by the door at right.</i>]	The man—where is he ?
ADHEMAR.			
FIRST POLICEMAN.			

JOSEPH.	}	The woman—where is she ?
WAITERS.		
SECOND POLICEMAN.		

OFFICER. We have the woman !

JOSEPH. The man also, then !

OFFICER. [*Pointing to the closet door.*] She is in there !

JOSEPH. [*Same gesture.*] He is in there !

OFFICER. [*Correcting.*] She—!

JOSEPH. [*Same tone.*] He—!

OFFICER. Both, then !

ALL. [*Looking toward the closet.*] Together !

ADHE. [*Forgetting himself.*] With his wife ?

ALL. [*Turning suddenly toward him.*] His wife ?

ADHE. [*Terrified.*] Caught ! I must skip. [*He rushes out through the door at right.*]

OFFICER. Arrest him ! arrest that scoundrel ! [*All the policemen and all the waiters rush after ADHEMAR. Alone.*]

His wife ! Why, in that case—

my conduct—Great Scott ! A thing that I ought to encourage—[*Going to the closet door and unlocking it.*] A thousand pardons, Monsieur ! Why, you have done nobly, Monsieur, nobly ! You are in the right ! Marriage combined with love ! [DES PRUNELLES *half opens the door and reaches out his hand, offering it to the officer.*] My compliments, Monsieur ! Keep right on ! keep right on !

DES PR. [*Coming out with his wife, who has put on her hat and cloak.*] Permit me to present to you Madame Des Prunelles !

OFFICER. Ah, Madame ! Ah, Monsieur ! What excuses can I offer ?

ALL. [*Bringing ADHEMAR back, rear.*] Here he is !—We've got him !

OFFICER. As for you, Monsieur, who have made a mockery of the majesty of the law——

CYPR. Ah, Monsieur le Commissaire, let him off, I entreat you !

DES PR. The savior of our conjugal bliss !

OFFICER. Very well, I will do it to please you and to win forgiveness for myself. [*To the policeman.*] Monsieur is free.

ADHE. [*To himself.*] Just what I counted on ! [*Music.*]

DES PR. [*Going to ADHEMAR, in a whisper.*] Keep your mouth shut, you blackguard ! or I'll have you jailed for spreading a false report ! [*Holds the telegram before ADHEMAR'S nose.*]

ADHE. [*Same tone.*] You knew about the telegram ?

DES PR. [*Same tone.*] Bet your life !—And now, my beautiful friend, you'll admit that you haven't got the ability——

ADHE. Apparently not— But to-morrow some other chap !

DES PR. Pooh! to-morrow I'll find some other scheme. [*To CYPRIENNE.*] What makes him rub his cheek that way?

CYPR. [*Laughing as she passes in front of the officer.*] Oh! that's my work! [*Makes the appropriate gesture.*]

DES PR. A slap? You gave him a slap? [*Making her pass in front of him, severely.*] You must make amends for it!

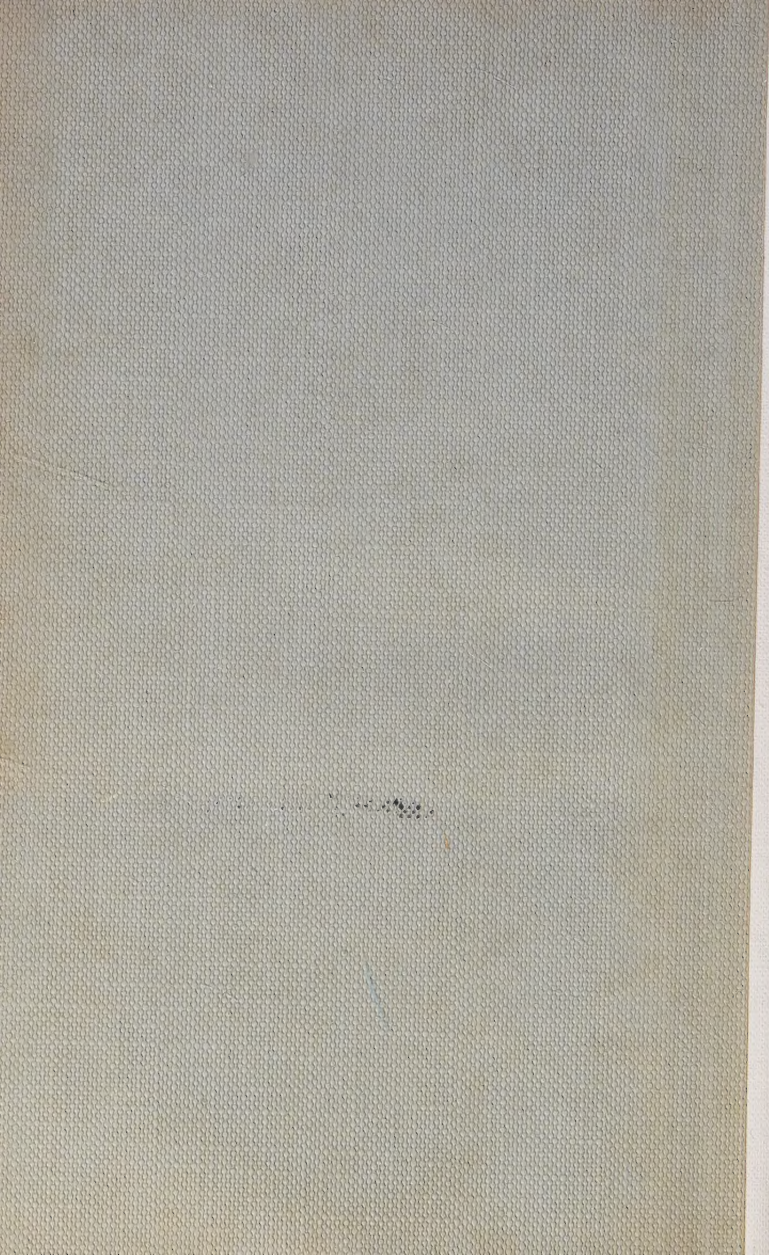
[*ADHEMAR, expectant, takes his hand from the sore spot; CYPRIENNE looks at ADHEMAR'S cheek and kisses her husband's, then she takes DES PRUNELLES' arm and bows politely to the OFFICER.*]

BOTH. [*Bowing.*] Monsieur le Commissaire!

OFFICER. [*Bowing.*] Keep right on, Monsieur, keep right on!

[*ADHEMAR has dropped into the chair at right. JOSEPH rubs his cheek with a napkin dipped in a glass of water, and the curtain falls at the moment when DES PRUNELLES and his wife go out, with an air of great gaiety, between the policemen and the waiters, who salute them respectfully.*]

CURTAIN.



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